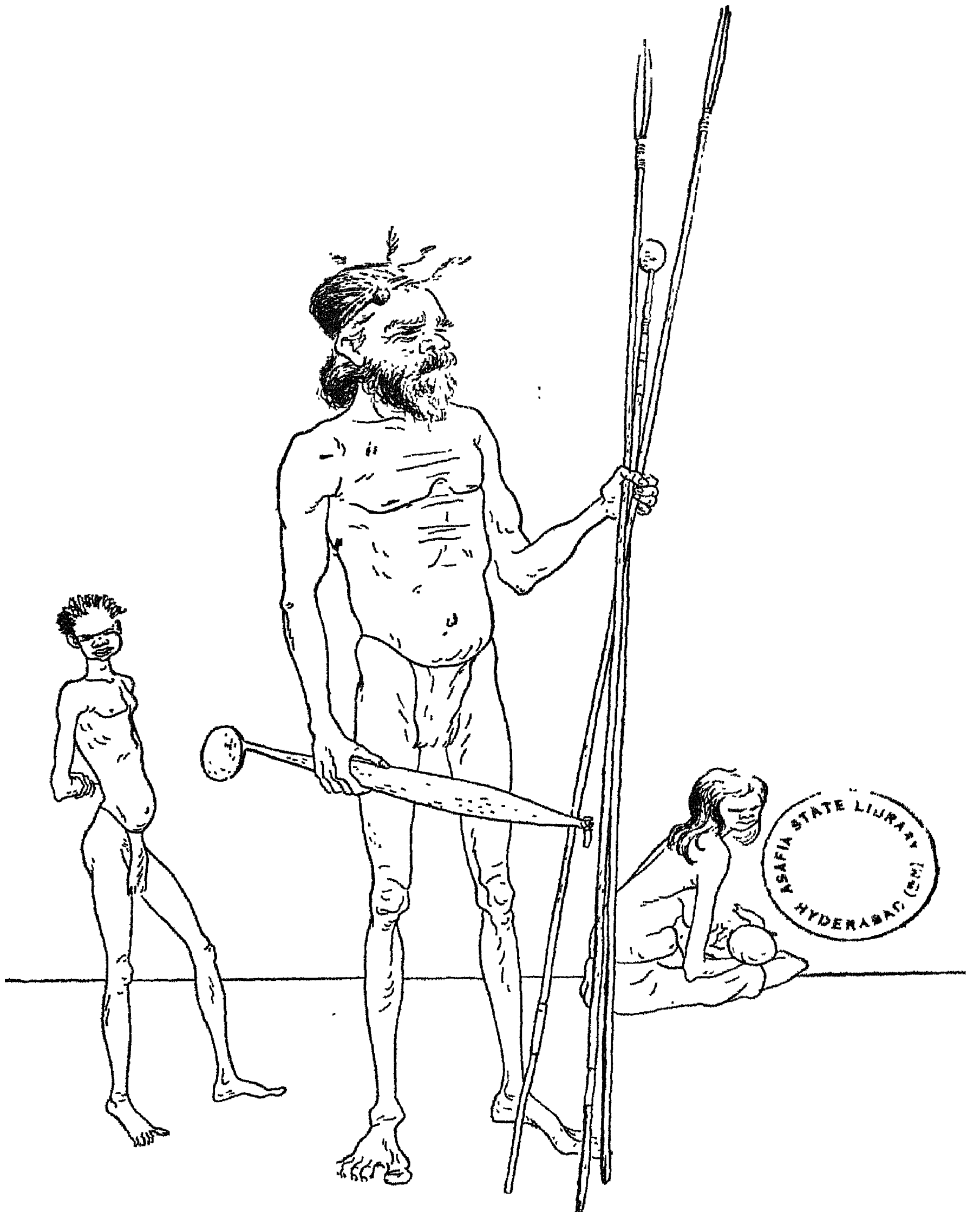
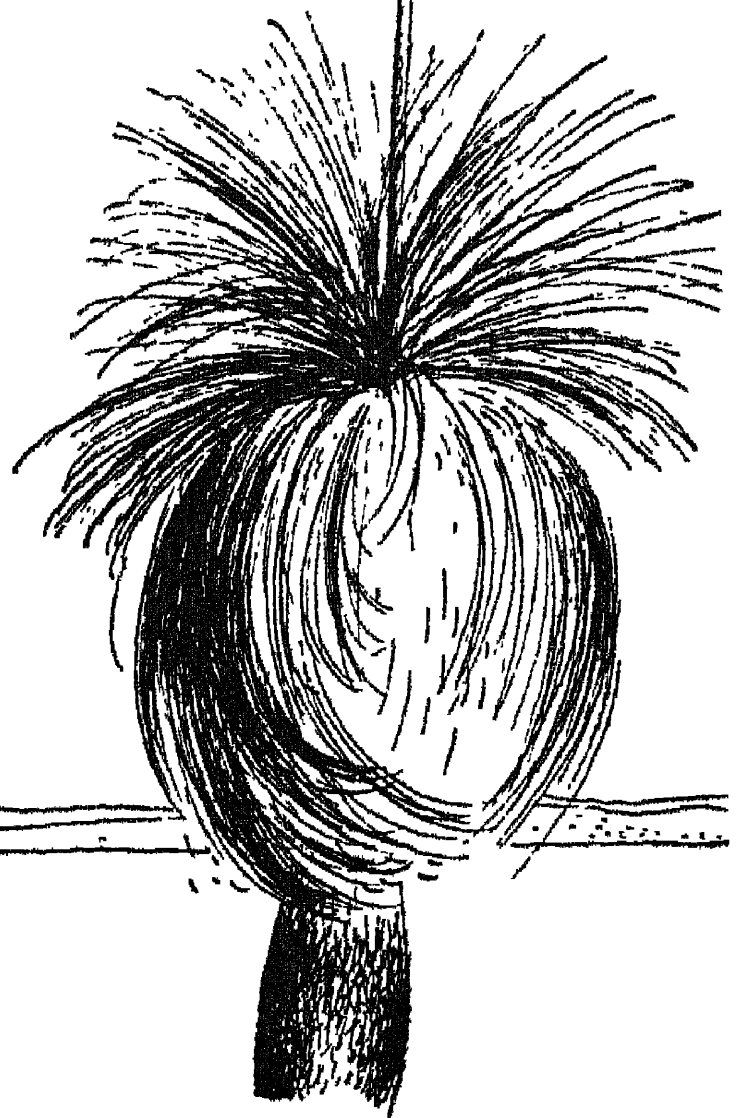


This Land of Ours . . .



THIS LAND OF OURS . . .

AUSTRALIA



Edited by George Farwell and Frank H. Johnston

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civilization rotting in forest undergrowth; these found nothing to suggest that man had ever, since the creation, made himself a permanent habitation in this land, or attempted to possess it in any sense which they understood. When they encountered the aborigines it was not to find them as established communities, but as wanderers whose camp might be here today and far away tomorrow; whose worldly possessions, so few and trivial, could be borne with them on their shoulders, and whose sojourn left no mark upon the land but the quickly scattered ashes of a fire. The newcomers felt themselves intruders not only into an unknown land, but into an unknown age; they had strayed back to the dawn of history.

Thus the distance they marked on their maps was not the only distance they had travelled. It was also the distance between themselves and these stone-age men; between the oak and the eucalypt; between the sociability of a closely-settled landscape and the loneliness of bush or desert; between lighted windows and empty darkness; between the village pump and hundreds of waterless miles.

While they were bridging these distances there grew up in them by degrees something of the rather grim friendliness which a man may come to feel for an antagonist with whom he conducts an interminable feud, giving and receiving no quarter. They learnt to accept, and even to value, solitude and silence, hardly aware that these things were developing in them something which had been part of aboriginal life for centuries, and which still survives to some extent among white Australians in parts of the continent—an indifference to time. To this day time and distance have, in the far north, a meaning quite different from that which is accepted in thickly inhabited areas. No one rushes about. Meals are leisurely, and schedules elastic. The train will wait while you go to the pub for a drink. A chance meeting extends into a period of yarning that may last for hours. Your next-door neighbour may be forty, fifty, a hundred miles away. A laconic road-sign announces that you will get water ninety-eight miles on. And in Alice Springs the road that runs a thousand miles north to Darwin is lightly referred to as "up the track".

Again, it is this not quite discarded sense of distance that still makes the Western Australians refer only half jokingly to their State as an "island". In their fine, modern city of Perth they are even now never quite forgetful of the Nullarbor Plains—that vast desert across which one travels for two days seeing nothing but flat, red earth that seems as endless and empty as the blue sky above it, and which, till the opening of the Transcontinental Railway in 1917, cut them off completely from the rest of Australia except by sea.

Nowadays new roads, fast cars, powerful trucks, aeroplanes, wireless, and, perhaps most of all, artesian bores, are opening up those areas which were once almost inaccessible to the ordinary traveller; time is rushing in with them. But there we can still catch a glimpse of the distances, the solitudes and the timelessness which were once the physical environment and the spiritual climate of all Australians, and which have left their mark.

What mark is it? We must seek the answer not only in what the first white settlers found, but in what they brought with them, for a nation grows from the give and take, the action and reaction between its people and its land. They brought with them, predominantly, rebelliousness and hope.

As A. P. Herbert has remarked, in those days it was very difficult not to be hanged, and most of the first arrivals had just managed to avoid it; they were felons whom their homeland had rejected—outcasts. Later came the free settlers, mostly of humble origin and slender means, for whom the conditions of agricultural or industrial labour in England at that time had spelt little better than starvation. Felon or free, therefore, they were mainly people to

whom life had seemed bitter and unfriendly, and in one way or another they had rebelled. In one way or another, too, they hoped. It was a hope that might range from sober and determined planning for a brighter future to that barely conscious feeling, so common to mankind, that there may be something better over the hill; but unless disease or physical debility had marked them with utter despair, they cherished some faint spark of hope. There came, also, a significant handful whose rebelliousness had been open, active and articulate, inspired by something more than their personal wrongs; that little group of men known as the Scottish Martyrs; some who had played parts as leaders in the Irish rebellion; the six farm labourers who had dared to form an agricultural trade union in the little village of Tolpuddle. Not only men were being transported, but ideas and moods.

These, then, were the kind of people who came to find the distances, physical and psychological, which have been mentioned—a land whose every feature and quality denied their past experience, and smote them with the shock of difference. A heady concept for the humble, accustomed if not reconciled to their lowly place in a hierarchical pattern! A potent idea—already set simmering by events in France and America—that society might not be irrevocably fixed in that pattern, but malleable! Disturbing, but oddly exhilarating, to be in a country so huge and so innocent of fences that land-hunger seemed no longer a presumptuous dream!

Yet if the poor had brought their moods, the authorities had also not come empty-handed. Armed with their laws, the muskets of their troops, and a set of well-meaning but not very sensible “instructions”, the early Governors imposed as much of the old pattern as the conditions of the country would allow. Despite their efforts, strange distortions occurred, notably in social relationships. Gaps began to close. It was no longer possible to keep the poor contented with their lot, or even acquiescent, for the unfamiliarity of the land bred conjecture, and conjecture bred dreams. The soil was visible and tempting, but what might not lie beneath it? Gold, silver, diamonds—anything! There seemed no limit to what might be accomplished by any man with strong arms and a stout heart—and never mind his origins or his history! Hope and rebellion, under the impact of the land’s enigma, developed into optimism, and a stubborn assertion of equality.

Yet enough of the old pattern was successfully imposed to make money and possessions, here as elsewhere, the standard of values and the mark of success. The poor on their few acres and the rich on their many fell upon the land in a frenzy of acquisitiveness, marking it with a cultivation which was, in many cases, indistinguishable from despoilment. Within a century they had spread over a continent. But in 1878, ninety years after the establishment of the colony, there were still only a little over two million people to settle and develop an area approximately the same size as the United States of America, so they were spread very thinly.

Not unnaturally, they were prone to congratulate themselves upon their occupation of this boundless *Lebensraum*. “*What a superabundance of the necessities of life is being possessed and enjoyed,*” exclaims a writer of that period, “*by the handful of people who are sparsely scattered over the enormous areas of these highly favoured countries The mines and quarries, the forests, the almost measureless expanses of pasturage, the fertility of a virgin soil . . . the natural increase of the flocks and herds which graze upon the succulent herbage . . . and the enormous clips of wool yielded by the sixty millions of sheep . . . combine to enrich the population, to increase the accumulations of capital, and to communicate a perpetual impulse to the general prosperity and progress.*”

Eldorado indeed! In those spacious days why pause to reflect that the pastures were, in fact, far from measureless, or that much of the soil, however potentially fertile, was barren without the rain which seldom fell on it? Riding dizzily to prosperity "on the sheep's back", why pause to watch the spectre of encroaching deserts, denuded of vegetation by the insatiable merino?

What was the effect of all this upon the people who now thought of themselves as exiles only in rare, nostalgic moments? They were, like other peoples, of an infinite variety, but certain general traits had been stimulated in them by the combination of conditions, environment and background. They had been forced into independence, and a self-reliant confidence which sometimes expressed itself in aggressive cocksureness. Loneliness had made them precious to each other, and developed a strong sense of solidarity. They had learnt to treat the clock casually. A roomy and expanding life had aroused almost extravagant optimism, yet its material demands, again combined with distance and solitude, had left them largely unaware of, or indifferent to the finer intellectual and spiritual achievements of civilization. The culture of their homeland had been left behind (and in any case had never been in any real sense the personal possession of most of them) and an indigenous culture was only in its first feeble infancy. It is significant that when it did begin to grow in earnest, it found its main inspiration not in the towns or cities, but in the lonely life of the bush, and reflected the curious, apparent paradox of the Australian character—optimism and melancholy. The optimism of rich opportunity in a material sense; the melancholy of gregarious man in solitude. Artificial social distinctions had dimmed almost to vanishing point, leaving the people a tight, isolated, homogeneous community, not so much asserting as assuming its individuality. The big, indifferent land had captured the imagination, and so transformed the half-friendly antagonism of early days into the quiet and certain love of those who now called it home.

And even as these adjustments were finally made, distance vanished. The thing which moulded us no longer exists. We have now to think again, not reversing the adjustments we made, but critically re-examining them, aware that every valuable quality is a bright coin with a dark reverse. Self-reliance and independence—so necessary for survival in great solitudes—could become a selfish and fatal isolationism in a world shrunk by modern communications, and crying out for co-operation. Solidarity is no longer to be confined within our own borders. The leisurely pace which kept us going once may not serve now that we are desperately involved in what H. G. Wells called the race between education and disaster. Optimism will never be anything but an asset unless it slides into fatuous complacency. The indigenous culture we are developing can find its full usefulness only if we see it as a contribution to world-culture, revealing us to our neighbours, and if we accept in return the other national cultures which reveal our neighbours to us. Artificial social distinctions are breaking down all over the world; we have the advantage that they never meant very much to us. Our closely-knit national individuality might, unless we are watchful, degenerate into xenophobia. Love for our country remains natural and right, but is no longer enough; we must learn, like the rest of humanity, that "the world is our village".

One quality which distance and its attendant problems forced upon us needs no revision, and can now stand us in good stead—adaptability. We adjusted to distance, and we can now re-adjust to the disappearance of distance. But we must do it quickly, for the race between education and disaster is on.

THIS LAND !

by Ian Mudie

*Give me a harsh land to ring music from ;
brown hills, and dust with dead grass,
straw to my bricks.*

*Give me words that are cutting harsh
as wattle-bird notes in dusty gums
crying at noon.*

*Give me a harsh land, a land that
swings, like heart and blood
from heat to mist.*

*Give me a land that like my heart
scorches its flowers of spring,
then floods upon its summer ardour.*

*Give me a land where rain
is rain that would beat high heads low.
Where the wind howls at the windows,
and patters dust on tin roofs,
while it hides the summer sun
in a mud-red shirt.*

*Give my words sun and rain,
desert and heat and mist,
spring flowers and dead grass,
blue sea and dusty sky,
song-birds and harsh cries,
strength and austerity,
that this land has.*

OUR WOMEN—FRANKLY SPEAKING

by Elizabeth Riddell

HOW disappointing it is to have to begin by observing that Australian women are really only Anglo-Saxon, Irish and Scots women modified by less than two hundred years of alien surroundings. That is, they do not differ from the rest of the English, Celtic and Gaelic women of the world in the way in which Greek women differ from French, or Turkish women from Danish. Nor, although they come from many of the same sources, have they had time to grow in the distinct forms of the American civilization. (We don't, for instance, have that frightening figure, the American Mom, nor the aggressive Big Business Woman. The easiest way for a woman to get money in Australia is the old-fashioned way of marrying a man who has money or knows how to make it.)

These modifications are physical and economic ones, with those of character and temperament only just emerging—they have not developed as definitely as in the male Australian. Perhaps the modifications are more interesting than the model. On the physical side the Australian woman develops early; she has between her teens and the age of thirty-five a big strong body—large bosom and long legs—which often runs to fat in later life. She starts with a good skin, which, although she supports a flourishing cosmetic industry, often tends to become coarse, thanks to the climate. Strangers notice and admire most her hair. Her expression is frank, and often challenging. The Australian woman seems to be thoroughly conscious of her body, passing directly from childhood's true unself-consciousness into an awareness without embarrassment. Without being too anthropological about this, it does seem as if it had something to do with the relatively free and open-air life of the Australian child, with long hot summers and bright winters in all but a small area of Australia.

The Australian woman's style of dress comes somewhere between that of her English and American sisters. When she leaves school and goes to work she can never be mistaken for a French or an Italian girl, nor has she the somewhat utilitarian appearance of the English office or factory worker, nor the incisive, uniform smartness of the American. In all cities except Melbourne she tends to dress in bright, light colours for the greater part of the year. She likes a lot of inexpensive, simply-cut clothes that will draw attention to her own looks rather than to the clothes themselves. Her taste in hats is elaborate, and her eye can be

lured by harsh colours. But the shop and office workers in all cities, and in the country towns, are as well and tastefully and suitably dressed as any in the world, as strangers who have watched the daily march on desk and counter will tell you.

Her appearance is catered for by a large and expanding industry that adapts its products from French and American fashion houses and leaves the importation of English clothes to the department stores, who have a certain set of customers to whom they can sell anything made in England. Since the British export drive enormous quantities of highly priced goods of fine quality have been sent to Australia. These products relieve the strain on Australian manufacture but in most instances they are too expensive for the woman of average means, who wants to spend no more than £10 on a dress. For that, she expects a good dress; £4 would suit her better, and that is what she will spend on the summer dresses that she does not make herself out of cotton or rayon fabrics. She wants to pay about £4 for her shoes, have her hair washed and set for 10s., pay less than 15s. for nylons, and not more than £5 for a hat, if that. But Australia's wartime boom made changes in the dress industry too, and women who before the war would pay £20 for a dress will now pay £60 or £80 if their husbands' bank accounts will stand it.

Temperamentally, the Australian woman—and here, of course, is dangerous generalization—is even-tempered but not phlegmatic, fond of dress and of certain obvious comforts and labour-saving devices, attracted by money and the physical expression of money and luxury, but not to the point of obsession, sexually easy-going and even adventurous within certain broad limits. She shares the shrewd, hard humour of the Australian male and his streak of abrasive cruelty, his will to destroy. But her swift, superficial intelligence leaves him a good way behind, and when she gets money and power she puts it to more intelligent uses than he does. When she goes abroad she may be detected not only by her accent but by her confident and lively manner, her self-reliance, and her uninhibited enjoyment of new scenes and experiences.

There is something else about her that one should always remember, because it is in a way a key to her personality: she is durable. Her physical and mental capacity is strong and elastic, and it is this elasticity, in her role of wife and mother or worker that enables her to resist the outside forces of disintegration that threaten her in Australia as they threaten women all over the world.

It is good that she has this resilient strength, because nowhere else in the world does a woman above the peasant class have to work so hard. She is a victim of the same scarcity of labour that protects her husband in his job. It inconveniences her to the point of hardship, especially if she has a job of her own as well as a household to run. The Australian woman is quite willing to work to pay for a piece of land or a house or her children's education, but the Australian domestic labour market is such that she has the greatest difficulty in getting anyone to wash her clothes, scrub her floors or weed her garden. In fact, in most places she cannot even persuade the garbage collector to walk down the garden path to pick up the bins, but must bring them out to the footpath herself if there is no man about the house. It is remarkable how little she seems to mind.

She is deeply devoted and affectionate with her children, even to the extent of letting their minds alone. She will do without a great deal to dress them better than adequately and feed them as the experts advise.

Because Australian men have a passion for playing, or more often watching, sport, and because they prefer to do this in the company of other men, the Australian woman spends

a good deal of time alone, or with her children, or in the company of other women. In some countries she may do this because there is a shortage of men, but in Australia this is not the reason. She is in the company of her husband more before she marries him than at any other time until he reaches retiring age. Lack of domestic help makes it difficult, admittedly, for husband and wife to go out together a great deal while the children are young, though the generally neighbourly spirit of Australian suburban communities—warmer and more informal than in England, for instance—gets over this difficulty to some extent. But the real reason for this aloneness lies in the temperament of the Australian male. Apart from his sexual interest and his desire for a comfortable home, his desire for the company of women is easily satisfied.

In case you should have heard that Australia is a classless society, it should be understood that it has at least a dozen different classes, perfectly distinguishable to the alert native though not so apparent to the visitor. The class to which one belongs is decided by the triple factors of income, occupation and inclination, much as it is in the United States. The divided family is a feature of Australian life as it is of the North American continent; that is, the parents and children may move on different levels, have a different set of acquaintances and activities, not only because of the gap between generations. The parents will have made their way, with possibly no time for social adventure, but the children will have gone to a certain sort of school and have made their friends there. There is probably no school in the country that will refuse to accept a child whose parents can pay the fees.

Australian mothers share with those of other countries the wish to see their children form the "right" school friendships, whether they or the Government pay for the education; that is, they want their children's friends to be useful as well as intelligent, loyal and well behaved. They also share the typical new country's reverence for the technically skilled professional man—the doctor, dentist, engineer and so on—especially women of Irish and Scottish descent whose forebears were handicapped by lack of education.

The membership of a class is, of course, constantly changing, with the variation in the members' standards, tastes, income and prospects. It is perfectly easy for the individual or the family to cross the border, going north or south, from one class to another. And in regard to this, there is no other country in the world where one so seldom hears the question: Who were her—or his—people?

As in other countries, it is usually the women who arrange these delicate transfers, and Australian women have a particularly keen eye for the nuances of social behaviour and signs. They can change their drinking habits from the almost universal beer to gin and cocktails without effort, and change their ideas of meals as well, though a certain unimaginative way of dealing with food remains from their origins.

The country women of Australia are also subject to class laws. The distinctions are more rigid and therefore easier to discern. Roughly, they are led by the wives and daughters of the old-established squatters, rich in land and stock. Then come the newcomers who made their money in trade and then bought land, and who, while working their land successfully, enjoy the privileges it confers, and will be gradually absorbed; the country town professional and white-collar families; the small farmer and tradesman; the labourer and itinerant worker.

Life for a woman in the country, even on a great property, can be relentlessly hard and dull, again because of the labour shortage, the occasional fuel and always imminent water

shortage, the frequent high temperatures, the immense distances between neighbours or townships. It can be more lonely, dull and frustrated than a woman of any class in a country of the northern hemisphere could even contemplate.

So much for the woman with the family, the homemaker, the essential Eve. The woman who has the sort of job that can be called a career, that may be continued after marriage and that gives her a position in the business world or in the world of art and letters and their allied occupations is in Australia becoming an increasingly important figure—important to herself, to the men with whom she works and competes, to the arts, sciences and crafts in which she is engaged. There is little prejudice against women, and the usual attitude of the male is, in all affairs, to give women a fair deal. If the big opportunities are not here yet they are at least limited only by the same factors that limit expansion for men, and not by a special set of anti-female prejudices.

Yet contacts of “career women” with men in their own line are more restricted than in other countries. The amenities of living that make casual intelligent contacts easy in Britain, America and the large cities of Europe are not for the Australian woman who is interested in ideas. The amount of time and trouble that it takes to look after a job and a house or flat—and if she is to have any real comfort in her non-working hours she must live in a house or a flat—leaves little time for such contacts. It would be useless to deny that this is a handicap.

On the other hand, serious work can be done in Australia by women as well as anywhere else, and any woman who wants to paint, write, plan, weave, design houses, cure men or animals of their diseases, practise chemistry or journalism, play the piano, dance, act or make good clothes can do these things equally with men within the framework of economic opportunity.

If, as some people prophesy, Australia will in a hundred years be in the position that America now occupies, great changes could occur in the status of women. There could even be the beginnings of a matriarchy (now apparent in the U.S.), with women holding not only moral dominance of their men, but having most of the money and political power too.

Or don't you care to think about it?

There may be some comfort in the thought that the Australian woman votes as her husband tells her; or, if she doesn't, she pretends she does for the sake of peace.

Many have told of the thin forests of Queensland, the open plains and the interminable downs whereon the mirage plays with the fancies of wayfarers; and of the dust, heat and sweat of cattle stations. Who has yet said or sung of the mystery of the half-lit jungles of our coast, in contrast to the vivid boldness of the sun-sought, shadeless western plains; of our green, moist mountains, seamed with gloomy ravines, the source of perennial streams; of the vast fertile lowlands in which the republic of vegetation is as an unruly, ungoverned mob, clamouring for topmost places in unrestrained excess of energy; of still lagoons, where the sacred pink lotus and the blue and white water-lily are rivals in grace of form, in tint and in perfume?

E. J. Banfield: *Confessions of a Beachcomber* (Angus & Robertson.)

THE PAINTER'S ART

by Clive Turnbull

PAINTING has always been the most popular of the arts in Australia. Once in a while people have even been known to make a living at it, although the great majority of painters, like almost all serious writers and musicians, are forced to earn their bread and butter by some humble sideline. But, if there is no Australian Millais revelling in the High Life on the products of his brush, there is a legion of "Sunday painters", plus a very considerable band of professionals whose variable income from art is supplemented by the more reliable revenues of teaching.

In one sense—not a financial one—art flourishes. An enormous number of pictures is produced. About 5000 of them are shown in Melbourne alone annually. This extraordinary plenitude arises from the fact that in most cases artists do not have to pass the preliminary scrutiny of a dealer concerned with profit or an institution concerned with standards. A room—dignified by the name of gallery—may be hired by anyone with the rent in his pocket. He then arranges for some accessible personage—anyone from a politician to a visiting tap-dancer—to perform an "opening ceremony", sends invitations to the Press and to anyone else he thinks is likely to come, hangs his pictures and awaits events.

As a rule a few of the artist's friends turn up and buy a few pictures and, the fortnight having run its course, the exhibition closes and is replaced by another of like inconsiderable quality. These constitute the majority of shows, and unutterably dreary most of them are. The exhibitions in galleries more properly entitled to the name, in which some standards of competence are imposed, are as plums in a vast pudding of mediocrity.

The popular art of Australia is predominantly Impressionist landscape. There is nothing surprising about this, of course. Australians of an earlier day were profoundly interested in the physical appearance of their country, in the difference between the green woods, lush meadows and placid streams of Britain and these harsh, arid landscapes, dusty trees, endless distances of shimmering plain, and heat-hung ranges. It is reasonable to wish these things to be depicted, to have the trained eye of the artist seize on the features of a landscape which is known and apprehended but not consciously analysed by the layman. Places change, men grow old; it is natural to try to fix a moment at a given place for all time—to say here is the old homestead, or the old swimming hole, as it was when we were young.

The first painters who succeeded in "fixing" Australia in this way did so with immense enthusiasm and much ability and in doing so they produced works of art. These were the members of the so-called Heidelberg School (because they painted around the valley of the Yarra at Heidelberg), and their contemporaries of the eighties and nineties—Arthur Streeton, Charles Conder, Fred. McCubbin, Tom Roberts, David Davies, Walter Withers and others. It was particularly fortunate that they had the open-air painters and the Impressionists of France to inspire them, though at some remove. In a time of vital development in Australia, of political and social excitement, they brought the ardour of youth to the application of their theories to the Australian scene. The work which they produced was so far from the old academic studio painting that at first it astonished the community and evoked ridicule. Today these men rank as the Constables and Boningtons of Australian art.

These halcyon days came to an end. Some of the painters went away, Conder never to return, Streeton to return changed. An economic crisis and a long period of depression made life as an artist even more difficult. But the seed had been sown. These men had revealed a new way of seeing Australia. They had shown that not only were Australian trees and Australian contours different, but that Australian light and Australian atmosphere were different. No serious artist would ever again (except in Tasmania) paint an Australian landscape which might be mistaken for something out of northern Europe. This fundamentally recognizable and realistic manner of painting became the popular manner. A new generation of painters of landscape grew up. But something had gone—the lyrical ardour and enthusiasm of the eighties. The spirit of the time was different. A formula took the place of the inspired zeal of the pioneer Impressionists. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of landscapes were painted, all alike as peas in a pod, and they are still being produced. They differed in another and important respect from the works of the Heidelberg School, for they were dehumanized. There were never any people in them—only plains, distant ranges, sunlight and heat haze. The gum-tree was lord of living things, the city was repudiated.

No doubt the fact that this kind of modified Impressionism was commercially successful in some degree accounted for this. The Heidelberg painters had been interested in humanity as well as in haystacks. Streeton had an eye for the urban scene, Roberts thought a Little Bourke Street eating-house worthy of his attention, Conder was full of humour. The titles of the works in the now celebrated Impressions exhibition of 1889 are illuminating: by Streeton, for instance, "Eastern Market", "Albert Street, East Melbourne", "Hoddle Street, 10 p.m."; by Conder, "How We Lost Poor Flossie", "Fruit Market", "Collins Street, 11 a.m."; and so on. These pictures sold for a guinea or so (they were painted on cigar box lids and many have been split for kindling). But when paintings of the Australian scene began to appeal to people who could afford higher prices a different sort of tune was called for. Wealthy patrons did not want pictures of Hoddle Street at any time whatever to hang in the billiard-room. What they did want was pictures suggestive of fair open country, uncontaminated by human beings, especially the kind who would be seen in the Eastern Market, and that was the kind of painting they got and still get. Australian Impressionism became divorced from Australian life, a mere bloodless repetition. It is still eminently safe and respectable. Clubs and Town Halls, mortuaries of taste almost everywhere, are full of it. Meanwhile much had been happening in Europe. On the foundation of the Impressionists others had builded. The names of Cézanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin and other Post-Impressionists came to be known, as well as of certain "wild men" such as Matisse. It was

not to be supposed, when so many exciting things were happening (or had happened, in fact) elsewhere in the world that all Australian painters would be satisfied with the anaemic repetitions of Impressionism as it had become. So at last the revolution came to Australia, somewhat later than it had come to London and New York, and the "new" theories of old Cézanne and the others found eager listeners, and such men as Roland Wakelin in Sydney and George Bell in Melbourne to expound them.

Some of the adherents of Australian Impressionism (not all, of course) hated the new ways of painting and opposed by every means in their power both Post-Impressionist artists and their work. But the battle has long since been won and the trend in most art schools is all towards Post-Impressionism. Indeed it threatens to provide an example of the odd things which happen to rebels when they become kings, for Cézannism shows signs of becoming as much of a thoughtlessly applied formula as was Impressionism before that. Today both these modes of painting flourish side by side, broken up into sub-groups by literary influences such as Surrealism and Social Realism which look for specific virtues of subject matter or message. So far as method goes, there is presumably in no part of the world any way of painting which is not also practised in other parts. What we must try to find in Australian painting, if we wish to distinguish it from other painting, is some peculiarly Australian way of seeing, something which grasps the spirit as well as the form of the Australian scene.

Russell Drysdale, one of whose works is reproduced with this article, is not only one of the most brilliant but, in the best sense of the term, one of the most Australian of painters. Drysdale belongs to that group of younger Australian artists who seem to me to have as intense an emotional response to the Australian scene as had the Heidelberg School. Of course it is a different sort of response, and the difference is the difference between 1889 and 1949. We have been through a lot since 1889—two world wars and two depressions. We have seen the harsher aspects of life and of our own country. The eighties belong to a world of innocence by comparison. Drysdale knows the country and its harder side—the struggle for life in drought-scorched and eroded places as well as the sunbaked somnolence of the country town with its red brick pub and the long street straggling away into the distance. Drysdale is the most thoughtful of painters and his work shows a continual progress, not only in the technical skill with which he handles his forms, and his rich colour, but in his development in the expression of human values. His early stylized figures are taking on flesh and blood, as they need to if this kind of work is to be part of the whole Australian scene along with Henry Lawson's stories and John Manifold's poems. Not only because he seems to me a very good craftsman, but because he has done more than any other contemporary painter to express Australia, I should assess Drysdale as our most important practising artist.

Irritating as it may be to both of them, it is scarcely possible to think of Drysdale without thinking of William Dobell. In background, work and temperament no two painters could be more unlike; but they are inevitably bracketed because they are both young or youngish and are as yet unapproached in their respective ways by any other painters of their time.

Dobell has twice won the Archibald Prize for portraiture with works which displeased the conventional because they had none of the qualities of the rubbish which, aping bad photography, takes up most of the wall-space at such competitions. Dobell is steeped in the English tradition. He has not only high technical gifts but he has a seeing and mordant eye.

His portraits are not only essays in pictorial organization and in colour harmony but, as they ought to be, demonstrations of psychological insight. In a country in which most portraiture is of the biscuit-label standard such work is not only conspicuous but startling. Perhaps it is felt that there is something shocking in the public dissection of a sitter's soul—that a portrait should be vacuous, a sort of life-in-death mask. A Rowlandson-like mordancy, indeed, does seem to belong to Dobell. One does not look to him for tenderness, although there is compassion in one of his best-known studies, "Irish Youth".

Dobell is not only a portrait painter. His landscapes are no less accomplished. I have rated him second to Drysdale not on technical points, for he is unrivalled in Australia in his own categories, but in the expression of an Australianism. Dobell, so far as his work has gone, is an intense individualist, offsetting an amiable gregariousness in his personal life by an apparent misanthropy in his work. One would like to see in it a greater affirmation of human values, to see this fine painter free of whatever it is that appears to inhibit a full emotional expression.

As a third example I choose a younger man, Sidney Nolan, a lyrical painter whose transmuted world pays little attention to geometrical conventions but is concerned with the poetic aspects of things. Nolan's big shiny pictures with their distortions and interesting colour patterns strike the unaccustomed observer as naïf, a sort of affected child-art; but they are anything but that. Nolan has painted a series of pictures illustrating episodes in the career of the Kelly Gang of bushrangers. Seen together as a unity in an exhibition in Melbourne these works made up one of the most stimulating of recent art shows; but the exhibition passed largely unnoticed. The Kelly works are at present in France. Nolan, whose work is gaining an increasing attention in a limited circle, is now painting in Sydney.

These three painters I have chosen as examples. One might list the work of a dozen or two dozen more, but a mere catalogue will serve no purpose. To sum up, then, once upon a time there were artists who could see only a southern England. They were like those pioneer colonists who surrounded their Georgian villas with oaks and elms, filled their walled gardens with apples and apricots and, with their furniture, their glass and their cutlery imported from the home country, set themselves to create an atmosphere as like as a differing climate would permit to that which they had known from childhood. (It is significant that there are no Australian colonial cabinet-makers or silversmiths whose work is known, as that of the American colonial craftsmen is known. At the time of the colonization of Australia it was easier to import all these things.) These pioneers and artists, were English. Their sons began to realize the peculiar qualities of the landscape to which they were born and the painters of the time began to paint it. Today we reach the third stage with the birth of an Australian national consciousness which is reaching expression as the American national consciousness reached expression in the time of Mark Twain.

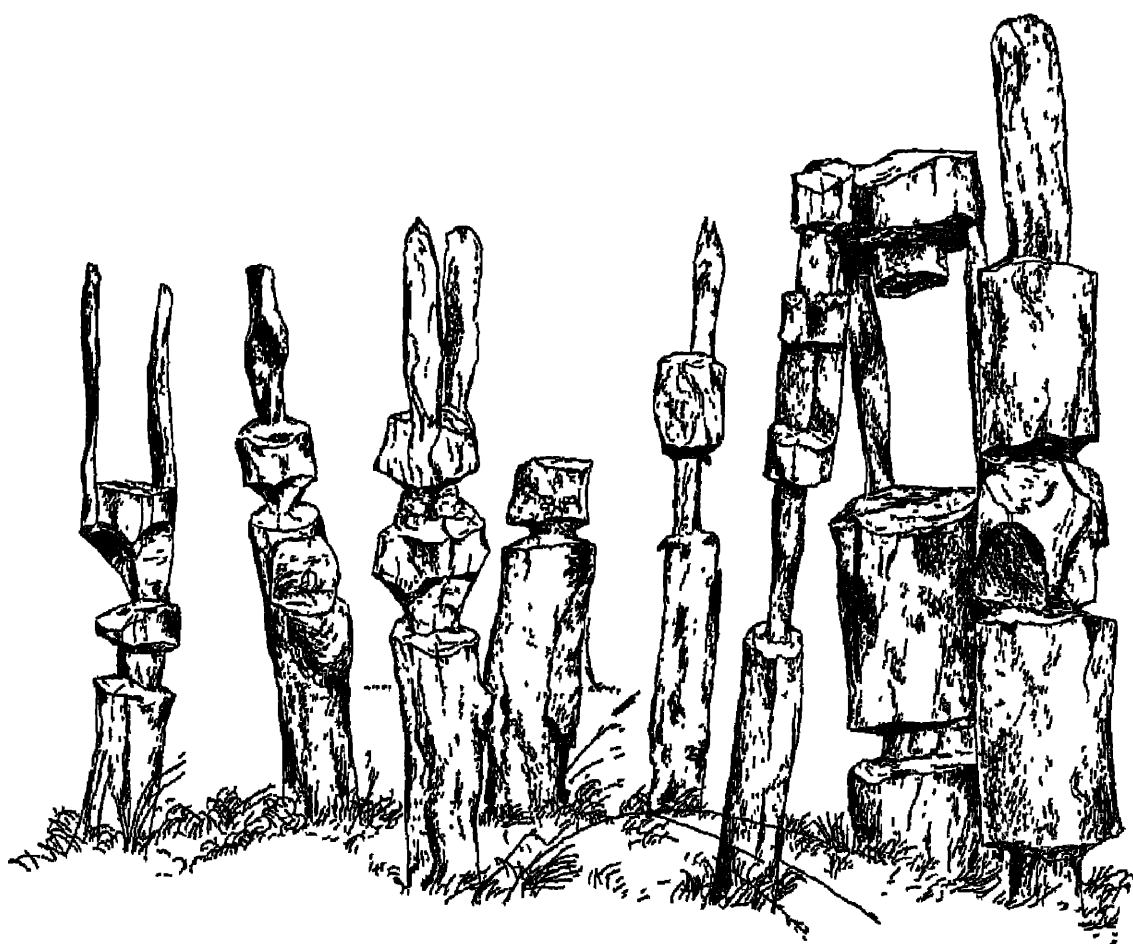
The Australian painters who matter, I believe, are not those who are imitating the manners and subject-matter of generations gone in Europe, but those who are seeking to explore for themselves the Australian scene—the vast reaches of the back country, the seedy side streets of proletarian Sydney, the odd rococo remainders of Victorian Melbourne, the new and vigorous elements of industrial expansion. If you disdain subject-matter, as some people do, these things will not matter; nevertheless the fact remains that in all ages the greatest artists have been most passionately interested in the world about them and have chosen to express eternal truths in terms of that world.

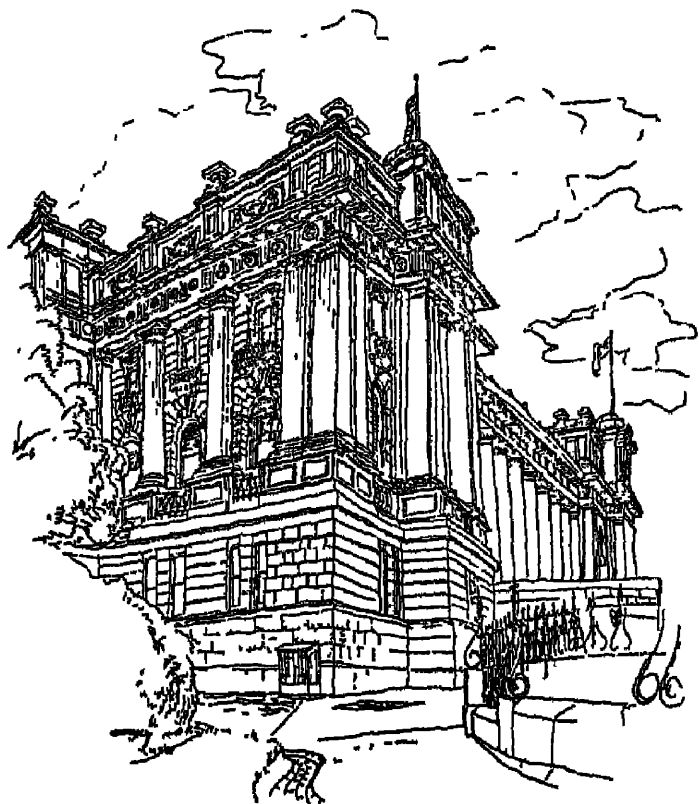
My own feeling is that in this down-to-earthness lies one of the qualities most to be cherished in Australian art of any kind. Much European art is escapist—because the reality is so unpleasant that anyone who does not wish to give battle to it is bound to try to fly from it. But the misfortune of Europe is no virtue in other countries such as Australia or Mexico, and it is perhaps not without significance that in such places the seed of the old tree has flourished more vigorously in a soil not yet spent.

In all the best Australian painting there does seem to me to be the same questing spirit, the same aim to express in paint the qualities and aspirations of a country which is only now beginning to realize itself: by which I do not mean that there is any Australian school in the sense that all Australian paintings fall into one recognizable category: It may be possible that they are recognizable from the qualities of light and aridity of atmosphere; but this will be more obvious to a non-Australian than it is to me.

Since the days of our colonial topographers we have gone a long way. A native art has developed. (It has little or no relation in most cases to the art of the aboriginal people of Australia, a misfortune indeed.) It is the art of a people who live in what is, for the most part, a hot, dry, hard country. They are a vigorous and independent people, as they have had to be to survive. They are conscious neither of the extreme depths of the northern European winter nor of the ecstasies of a springtime relief from want and bitter cold. Their habitations are not long lived in; there is not a sense of a storied past charted by the numberless generations. The struggle with nature is not sharply differentiated into seasons but constant; and in much that comes to be thought beautiful there is conflict and even danger.

All these things will, in time, produce a distinguishable art—not an art different in ways of painting, for all ways of painting are now common to most of the world, but an art different in content and overtones, as different from the art of Britain, no doubt, or even of the United States as the art of the Low Countries is different from that of Italy. Such an art is now coming into being.





COLLINS STREET

by Geoffrey Hutton

WHEN Sir Richard Bourke stepped ashore on the bank of the River Yarra, a little more than a century ago, and surveyed the huddle of turf huts which the Port Phillip settlers had thrown up, his orderly mind was probably turning already around blueprints and surveyor's pegs. Before he ended his visit in 1837, the City of Melbourne, or at least the heart of it, already existed on paper, an intelligent child's plan for a city, a neat gridiron of ten-acre blocks with wide streets for the front entrances and narrow lanes for the mews. Later a plough-furrow confirmed surveyor Hoddle's plan, and when convict-gangs had felled and grubbed their way along the first plough-line, Melbourne already had the germ of its most famous thoroughfare—the handsome and extremely wealthy Collins Street, which has been described by loyal Melburnians as the Champs Elysées of the South, the Australian Fifth Avenue, and Melbourne's Piccadilly.

This attachment to a single street, a sort of civic shop-window, is common to many cities; in Melbourne it seems to have existed from the bush-whacking and gold-digging days. But it is rare in Australia, where more pride is commonly taken in natural accidents like surf-beaches or sunshine or convenient harbours. Melbourne's topography was wholesome but plain, and it could not very well take pride in its weather. Its river was charming—and also useful enough to decide the placing of the city—but Melbourne people, overwhelmed by the grandeur of Port Jackson, seem to have felt acutely self-conscious about its smallness and its brownish colour. If they had seen that yellow and treacly stream to which the Romans prayed, they might have taken a healthier pride in Father Yarra, but they seem to have accepted too easily the sneers and ribaldries of visitors from more water-bound cities. Two things they possessed which Sydney lacked—straight, wide streets and plenty of room round the city for gardens and formal approaches. The distinctive qualities of Melbourne were self-made, not accidentally inherited.

But Hoddle was no Haussmann, and the gridiron he laid down lacked a natural centre. Melbourne grew with no Piccadilly Circus, no Place de la Concorde. The economic pressures set up by the city's growth marked out the shopping centres from the gaunt streets of warehouses. Doctors and lawyers, Chinese cabinet-makers, bankers and theatre-managers

gathered into their precincts. Each street, sometimes each block, acquired a character. As mile after mile of suburbs piled up around it, the city itself grew more concentrated. Bourke Street became its Oxford Street and its Holborn, a noisy and incoherent patchwork of shiny mammoth stores and shabby relics of the past, a place to shop in but not to linger in.

Only Collins Street attained to dignity and coherence without losing animation. City authorities planted its length with trees in imitation of the Paris boulevards; architects pushed its towers up to the building limit. Some sort of tacit understanding seems to have protected it from the eyesores which disfigure most of its neighbouring streets. Tourist posters fixed Sydney in the world's eye as the Harbour Bridge; they fixed Melbourne as the prospect looking westward along Collins Street. What could be more typical of the civic virtues of this great city than a handsome avenue of plane-trees carrying the eye upwards to Gothic church spires and the imposing towers of insurance offices?

Australia has no monumental streets because it was built almost entirely in the period of laissez-faire, and for the same reason it lacks the unifying force of a strong tradition which gives character to the older towns and streets of Europe. Melbourne started with a coherent plan, but Hoddle's ten-acre sites were sold off in the first land auction in half-acre building blocks, and since most of the buyers were Englishmen or Scots, they would have taken unkindly to any attempt to coerce them into building in harmony with their next-door neighbours. Melbourne was built by sturdy individualists, and it was largely built in the period when English architecture was going to pieces—the period after 1830. Sydney got its start in the good days of Georgian elegance and plainness, and it has not succeeded in destroying all its fine historical buildings even yet. But Collins Street has no historical buildings to be particularly proud of; on the whole its best buildings are its newest ones and a little pinpoint bombing, carried out by aviators with a training in architecture would do it a world of good.

With these handicaps to good planning and good building, it is significant that Collins Street has turned out so much better than the rest of the city. Its ground plan, a straight mile and a little over, is good because it straddles two hills and the dip between them, so that when you stand on a rise you can take in most of the street at a glance. It is all alive; there are no dreary backwaters which the tide has passed by. The architecture, for the most part, is handsome, and there is a hint of American influence in many of the newer buildings, an upward line which suggests miniature skyscrapers, rather than the lumpish squareness affected by so many of London's architects in the period between the wars. The style varies as the street changes character, but its distinctive quality is a dawning sense of coherence. There is nothing like uniformity of style, but here and there, buildings stand together in groups without elbowing each other. At the eastern end something like a building level emerges, and the dominant colour is light. The Block is light too, with the lightness of concrete and tiles instead of painted stucco, but here there is something of a jumble between new and old, giants and dwarfs, for the war halted a building boom which was transforming the heart of Melbourne from the nineteenth century to the twentieth. It will be better when the transformation has been completed. Farther west the tone becomes sombre; there are more browns and greys among the banks, business-houses and insurance offices. Lightness is creeping in, but until recently the fortresses of wealth seem to have been designed to inspire awe rather than enthusiasm. There is a certain forbidding dignity about this miniature City of London, and it is not until you approach the western limits of Collins Street that the standard falls away.

These variations in style indicate the changes in character of the street, because, cutting lengthwise through the city, it becomes not one street but three. In terms of London, it is Harley Street and Threadneedle Street, alpha and omega, and between them it holds in miniature the fleshpots of Piccadilly. It is even more, for it is sprinkled with hotels and churches, it discreetly hides Melbourne's more expensive and exclusive clubs, and it carries you from the serene silences of officialdom to the agitated clatter of the interstate railway station. For all that, it has a character, and it is only seldom that it is really vulgar or thoroughly shabby.

There is no doubt that the section of Collins Street which gives the warmest glow to honest Melbourne hearts is the eastern end, usually called the top. Here on the hill a distinct and pleasanter character has emerged than you will find in many cities with so short a lifetime. The building here is not pretentious; it forms a subdued and mercifully plain background to the opulent and well-established plane-trees which make it an avenue rather than a place of business. When autocrats decided to route Melbourne's particularly noisy electric trams through this section of the street, newspapers led an outcry against such vandalism. The campaign was vigorous and fruitless; the trams came and they have made little difference. Paris is still Paris, in spite of the Eiffel Tower.

To the doctors and dentists, in whose name the campaign was conducted, the noise does not seem to have mattered much. To put up one's plate in Collins Street still means a licence to charge specialists' fees and keep specialists' hours. Between the consulting-rooms hide clubs and quiet hotels, a sprinkling of chemists and opticians, small cafés, military tailors and expensive modistes, with a bookshop and a branch bank or two. The tendency is towards modesty of size; this is the natural home of those coy, plush-lined enterprises which do not fight for custom like the brash and busy stores of Bourke Street. Even the vista at the end of the street is in character, for it is beautifully sealed by the Treasury Building, lightest and most elegant of Victoria's Government offices.

This is the hilltop most favoured by photographers; over the brow of the hill the towers and pinnacles of the Block already show above the plane-trees. The transition is made gently; the shops are bigger, there are churches and cinemas, tobacconists and milk-bars. The Town Hall, a florid imitation of the standard architecture of Paris, still preserves one corner of Swanston Street from commerce, but it has been dwarfed and marooned. The Block, which originally was sold for £20 a half-acre, has become the place to meet friends, to show off clothes, the playground of gilded youth, the most overcrowded and expensive piece of land in the whole metropolis. Success stories have little variety, but there is something unusual about the honeycombing of these few hundred yards of frontage. Tea shops, dry-cleaners and other small fry have gone below ground or climbed to escalator level, and the whole section is criss-crossed with arcades where coffee or craftwork, lingerie or knick-knacks are sold in shops little bigger than linen-presses. This indoor city has grown recently and rapidly, and it has no exact counterpart elsewhere.

Montaigne, in his enthusiasm for Paris, may have loved even her blots and blemishes, because they were part of her character; no one could fall into the same sentimental attitude towards the pinchbeck survivals of Melbourne's past. It is best to turn your back on Spencer Street and look eastward from the next rise, watching the trees dip and climb together, seeing behind them the lines of buildings dwindling to a closed vista. It is not a finished street or a uniform conception, but it has some dignity and, imperfect as it is, some sense of style.



SURF—Poise, agility and endurance are needed by men who ride the surf along hundreds of miles of beaches in the heat of summer. Long breakers rolling in from the ocean offer exhilarating sport for holiday-makers over long week-ends.

Kiddies learn while young to swim on sunlit beaches, many only a short distance from the big capital cities on the coast.





IN SUMMER the call of the surf is irresistible along hundreds of miles of coastline. It is perhaps Australia's greatest sport, healthy and invigorating. Within half an hour of the city streets the surf towers and tumbles, drawing crowds to its restless music. The long swathe of white sand along a surf beach is an ever-shifting mass of colour tanned girls and their young men sprawling under multi-hued beach umbrellas, kiddies playing in the sand, swimmers in bright costumes thrusting through white-combed breakers, flags streaming out in the breeze, the striped swim-suits of the surf patrol.

Carnivals staged every Saturday in the summer months reveal the beaches at their best: the parade of vigorous young men, champions, many of them; surf drill with all the precision and ritual of a ballet; the running out of lines and reels; and the life-savers' boats with blunt bows upthrust, riding in upon the breakers or ploughing out through heavy seas.

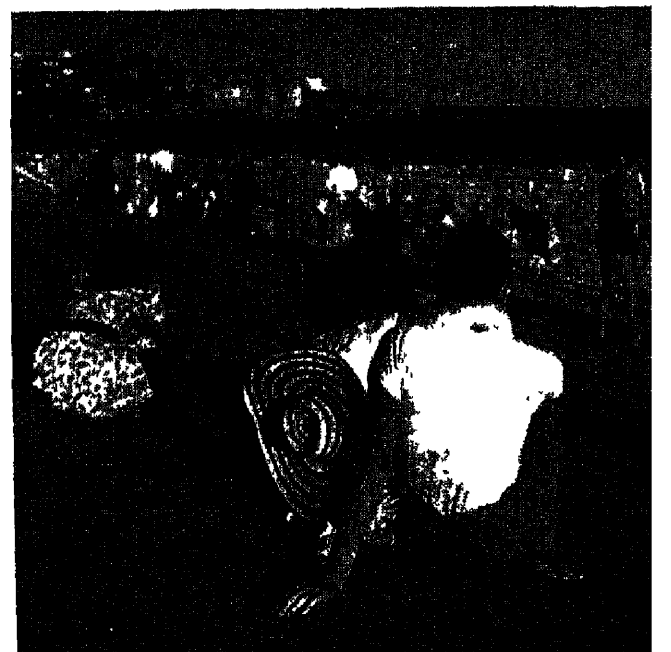
Now and again swimmers may find themselves in trouble, for there are strong currents, undertows, mighty waves that suddenly sweep far up the beach. Thousands of rescues are made each year by the volunteer surf patrols. In forty-one years since their inception, they have saved 66,732 people from drowning. In all that time there have been only twenty fatalities.

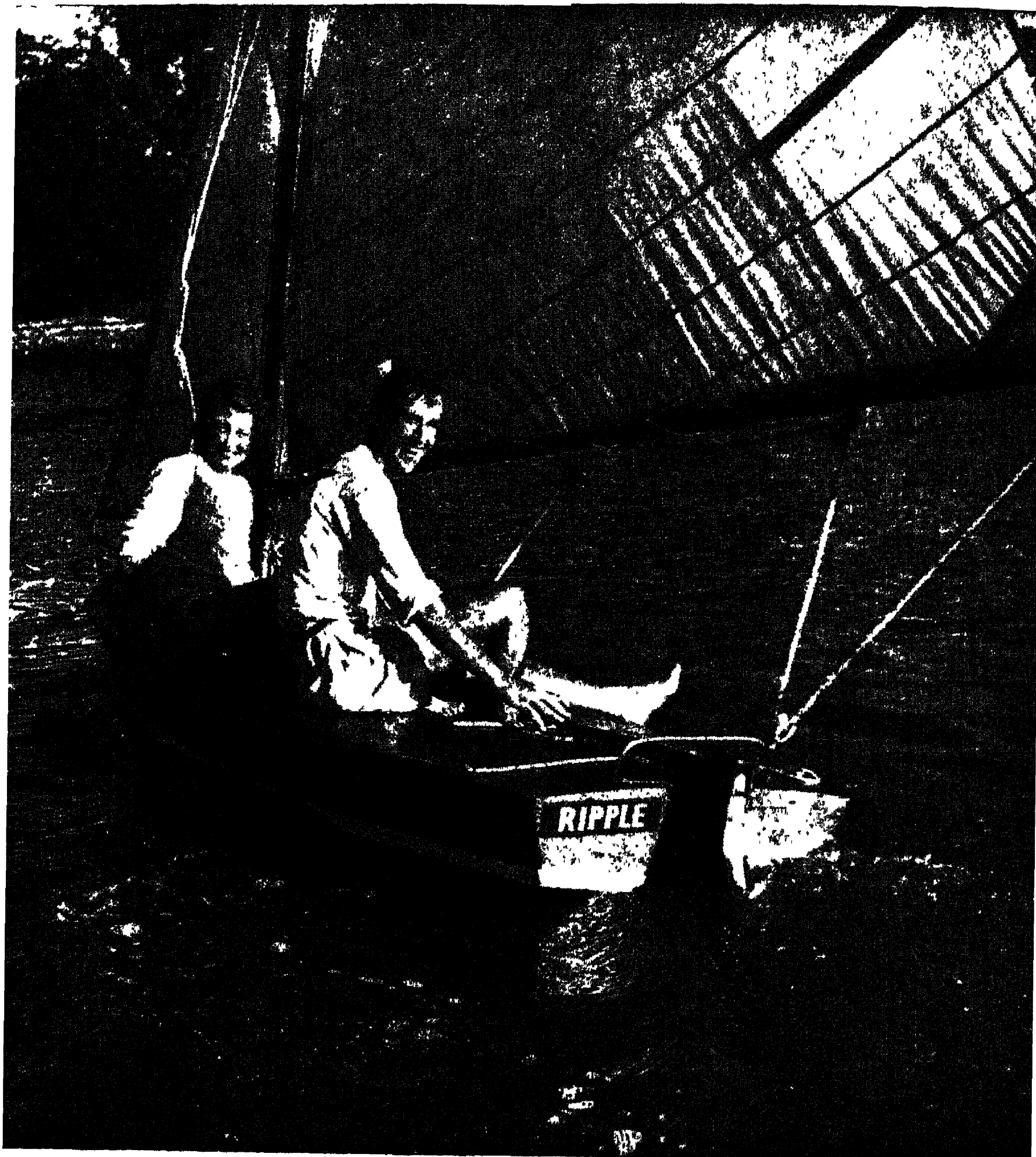


The work of the Surf Lifesaving Association is unique to Australia. Their funds are contributed almost entirely by private citizens. In New South Wales alone members number more than six thousand, each of them volunteering up to fifty hours each week to patrol the beaches. Their training is rigorous, their feats of endurance remarkable. The greatest mass rescue ever carried out took place at Bondi, New South Wales, when two hundred surfers were carried out to sea after a sandbank collapsed. All but five were brought back safely to the shore.



A sturdy surf-boat, with its well-trained crew, puts out through heavy seas during a race at carnival time.





Sailing in the quiet reaches of Sydney's broad harbour, teen-agers learn the art of sailing, preparing for bigger races later.

SAILING—In the quiet reaches of Sydney's broad harbour teen-agers learn the art of sailing, preparing for bigger races later on. Day after day you may see their VJ's, a unique Australian type of craft, running before the wind, tacking in front of ferries and big freighters from overseas, revelling in the strong north-easterlies.

With spinnaker flying, "Farewell", one of Sydney's 600-odd 16-foot skiffs runs down wind in a harbour championship race. Though prevailing winds are nor'-easters, an occasional southerly buster provides thrills for the sailing enthusiast and excitement for the thousands of spectators who follow the small craft in specially chartered ferries. →

UNDER SAIL

by Lou d'Alpuget

IF you want to know about Australia you must learn about her amateur sailors, who take to the water round our 20,000-odd miles of coastline and navigable estuaries in anything that will float and support a spar. Any week-end you'll see these happy mariners, driving their craft to the limit—from eight-year-olds, dangling from the decks of Vee Jay twelve-foot skiffs, to toughened grandfathers, crouched over the tillers of the keel yachts, as they play tactical ducks and drakes around harbour buoys. And although you'll only occasionally glimpse them from the coast, at sea there'll be the ocean-racing buckos, taking all that the ill-named Pacific can offer, for little more than the thrill of handling a boat well and the fun of talking about it afterwards. Of course, this talking about their sport is not native to Australian yachtsmen; it is an international adjunct to boating, as popular among Eskimos studying the performance of a newly designed kayak as among members of the New York Yacht Club stewing over the latest six-meter.

But Australian yachtsmen, with a climate that permits sailing all the year round, with 10,000-odd sailing craft of twenty-five varieties, and more sailors in proportion to the population than any country in the world, use up a lot of words and many deeds between seasonal refits. And each year on Boxing Day and for the five days afterwards—the period of the annual 680-mile Sydney to Hobart ocean handicap—people who wouldn't know a mainsheet from a clove hitch talk yachting as if their favourite dish were salt water and their best friend a truly-running vessel, with an ability to carry big spinnakers in winds above Force Six. Although Australia's first organized sailing races were held more than a century ago, none has created a shadow of the interest of this four-year-old Sydney to Hobart classic. Crowds of 100,000 have seen the starts of the last two events, and until the first boat has crossed the finishing line in the Derwent River, with a third of Tasmania's population watching, the race is front-page copy for every newspaper in Australia.

You might wonder what makes these Australian yachtsmen, with delightfully sheltered waterways spread along their coasts and a thousand pleasant bays in which to sail, go to the open sea in small uncomfortable ships and work like demons, with rushed meals and little sleep, under constant physical and mental strain. They'll tell you that they seek escape from the responsibilities of the office, a chance to exclude themselves for a while from city crowds,

an exchange of the worries of industrial wrangling, rising prices, the shady grasping of the fellow next door, for a clean sea breeze, the freedom of uninterrupted concentration and the warm camaraderie of fellows well chosen for a tough job. To these reasons you can add delightful days at sea out of sight of land, skimming through sparkling blue water under a warm sun, watching the antics of the birds and sea creatures, and for spice, the great unpredictable: a gamble of skill, strength and courage against the elements, and a battle of tactics against one's opponents.

The Sydney to Hobart race was first held in 1945, when Sydney cruising yachtsman Peter Luke, now Commodore of the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia, which controls the event, persuaded eight other boat owners to line up with him at Sydney Heads for the long journey south. Fewer than a thousand people saw the start of that event. It was a different story a year later. Although most of the crew-men in that first race had not had much experience under sail "outside", and the yachts were not driven as hard as they might have been, eight of the nine starters finished the course. Royal Navy captain John Illingworth, a famous English ocean-racing skipper, who was on duty in Australia with the British fleet, won the event in his 34-foot cutter *Rani*, a locally built craft that he sailed to the limit of her strength and speed. *Rani*, on a wide off-shore course to gain the best of the wind and current that ran down the New South Wales coast and well into Bass Strait, "went missing" for five days of the seven that she took to sail the distance. The publicity that surrounded her "disappearance at sea" and then her sensational win against craft almost twice her length, clinched the success of the race among yachtsmen and the public: the Hobart handicap had become the greatest aquatic event of the year.

Illingworth told hearty and encouraging stories of *Rani's* voyage: how one night on deck he had gulped down a couple of mouthfuls of kerosene from a bottle that he believed was full of water; how the yacht's mate, Norm Hudson, who had learnt needlework on felt dolls in a R.A.A.F. hospital, had hand-sewn 175 feet of seams on a blown-out mainsail and had then taken his trick at the helm immediately the sail had been reset. Illingworth's yarns about ocean racing were almost as brilliant as *Rani's* win. He gave a delightful talk to yacht owners at a special meeting shortly before he returned to England.

"There's one thing a skipper must never forget," he said. "Always remember to say 'please' to the for'ard hands in bad weather. If you don't you'll find they'll burst into tears."

By December 1946 the fleet for the second race to Hobart had grown to eighteen. There were nine entrants from New South Wales, five from Tasmania, three from Victoria, and the New Zealand ketch *Ilex* had crossed the Tasman Sea from Auckland to compete. There were no "beg-pardons" that year. The husky little Norwegian-designed *Christina*, which took the main prize, really earned her win. Sydney dentist Bob Bull, her owner-skipper, and five companions drove the yacht for thirty hours through a Bass Strait gale to establish their winning break. Bull's mate was Jack Earl, who six months later began his round-the-world voyage in the ketch *Kathleen*. *Kathleen's* navigator, Don Angus, who so accurately pinpointed the ketch's positions during her eighteen-months' journey, also "took the sights" aboard *Christina*. *Christina's* performance convinced yachtsmen that to win the big race a vessel essentially must be designed on sea-kindly lines, that she must be stout enough to stand up to the worst of weather and rate well under the handicapping system. Particularly convinced of this was Tasmanian businessman George Gibson, who commissioned naval architect and ship-builder Jock Muir to design and build for him a craft that must possess three main characteristics: she must be fast, able to face the worst of weather, and keep

sailing and handicap well under the rules by which the time allowances of ocean-racers were assessed. Muir built for Gibson the yacht that has proved to be incomparably the best ocean racer in Australia—at least over the uncertain Sydney to Hobart course, where the winds during late December and early January are rarely predictable. They vary from cat's-paws to cyclones, ahead and astern of the fleet. Sometimes a yacht twenty miles to seaward might be running "downhill" while a rival inshore is close-hauled in a head wind. Gibson called his new vessel *Westward*, and won the 1947 and 1948 Sydney to Hobart races in her against classy opposition. There is little beauty about the powerful, high-sided, 41-foot cutter, but in 1947 *Westward* took the race from twenty-seven rivals after a series of following gales had swept the fleet south under shortened canvas. Two yachts might have beaten *Westward* on handicap in that race, if a little luck had been mingled with the tough going. They were Phil Bullock's gaff-rigged 50-footer, *Defiance*, which led for 750 miles of the course, and Sir Claude Plowman's 65-foot cutter, *Morna*, which struggled across the finishing line under jury rig—still first home—after a 75-mile-an-hour cyclone had torn her big racing mainsail to shreds and had ripped yards of a solid metal sail-track off her mast. *Defiance* took her beating off Maria Island, on the south-eastern Tasmanian coast, when the first gusts of the cyclone caught her under mainsail, topsail and spinnaker, planing down the fronts of big seas at what the crew claimed was seventeen knots. At this stage it became apparent, even to Jack Tiernan, *Defiance's* hard-driving skipper, that unless sail were reduced his cutter would soon be without her 60-foot mast. But it was impossible to drag down the topsail, which had jammed aloft, and that meant that the gaff and the mainsail were up there to stay, too. If they took down the spinnaker the craft would be so badly out of balance in the high following wind and steep seas that she would be unmanageable. So Tiernan edged *Defiance* in towards the Tasmanian coast in a desperate bid to find shelter, while he climbed the mast and cut free the sail that was overburdening the vessel.

At this stage, with the wind roaring and the sea gurgling continuously across the deck, two of *Defiance's* crew, Joe Palmer and Harry Shephard, struggled up the main hatchway to the cockpit, first with a sack of potatoes, then with a case of bottled beer.

"For God's sake, what's this for," screamed Tiernan, as he braced himself at the tiller.

"We reckon the boat we saw before the blow must be *Morna* catching up on us," replied Shephard, "and we're going to chuck this and a lot of other gear overboard to lighten us up a bit. You never know, it might give us an extra quarter knot."

That gesture of *Defiance's* storm-ridden team, told later in a casual yarn at the Royal Tasmanian Yacht Club, will outlive many anecdotes of the 1947 race. Yachtsmen will remember it long after they have forgotten *Defiance's* failure to sail clear of the heartbreaking lee of Cape Raoul, under which she was caught throughout the next day, while Tiernan prayed for a little of the wind he'd had during the night. A year after her first magnificent performance, *Westward* took her second Sydney to Hobart race when she outsailed fourteen other competitors during two days of hard following gales and three days of light to medium head winds. In the second race *Morna* was again first across the finishing line, but hopelessly placed on handicap to *Westward*. It showed that no craft in a true breeze could beat the Tasmanian champion under the accepted system of handicapping, unless she, too, were designed to "beat" the rules. And the handicapping system is completely foolproof. The fathers of off-hove racing—the committee of the Royal Ocean Racing Club of Britain—evolved the system after many years of experiment, so that vessels of all shapes and sizes could compete against one another. Factors considered in rating the yachts are length,

breadth, depth of hull, sail area, and the size of extras for running before the wind. After penalties and bonuses are assessed for construction and rig, each craft is allotted a Time Allowance Factor of four decimal places. To get the adjusted time, which decides a vessel's winning chance, her time allowance factor is directly multiplied by her actual sailing time. The vessel with the least corrected time is thus the winner. This brings all craft to a level where only the seamanship of their crews and their will to win cannot be measured: surely the only equitable basis. It means finally that for a winning chance one must race aboard a "rule-beater", or find a crew of supermen who will drive an over-handicapped vessel beyond her limits and hope for a lucky break.

Fortunately for the future of the Sydney to Hobart race there is an almost limitless pool of crew-men, well versed in harbour sailing, who are anxious to team for the annual marathon. One round trip teaches them plenty. But only three in every ten of these green hands are worth a place aboard after the first two days at sea in their first race, because while the handling of gear need not be so smart as in smooth-water racing, conditions off shore are vastly more difficult. Seasickness, inability to sleep properly for short periods, lack of normal comforts, are the main energy-sappers; but seasickness is the worst. Some authorities say that seasickness is purely psychological, others that it is caused by a faulty sense of balance, an incorrect diet, poor physical condition. You could get a thousand remedies for seasickness from the small-boat sailors and ten examples of the failure of each. Small-boat navigator George O'Brien offered that opinion to a Sydney night-club proprietor whose forty-footer he was navigating down the coast to Hobart, in the wake of the 1946 racing fleet. But the unfortunate owner, who had spent two days in his bunk, moaning sadly, finally rebelled against O'Brien's nonchalant assurance that he had a "fifty-fifty chance of recovering" and demanded that his yacht be taken into Jervis Bay, ninety miles from Sydney, while he "rested".

"You must realize, O'Brien," he protested, "that it isn't that I'm afraid to die. It's just that this is such an undignified way to do it."

Of course seasickness, sleeplessness and discomfort are not the only things that make ocean racing tough on crews. There is also the hard labour of setting "extras" for runs before the wind, shortening sail in bad weather, trimming sheets, and the concentration of steering "tight" courses. But I doubt if you could have bought the place of the lowliest runner-hand in the worst vessel in any of the four events sailed. He probably knew that he was going to take a beating before he stepped ashore, but balanced the thrills between the start and the finish as worth the experience. The dangers of the big race are so slight that they are hardly worth mentioning: a broken bone or two, one case of scalding, minor cuts and abrasions, a few cases of severe sunburn, are all that have been scored against the 600 men who have competed in the last four years.

Of course there is always the odd risk of a man tumbling over the side, or a big following sea sweeping a helmsman out of the cockpit. But only a fool takes a risk in bad weather when "one hand for the ship, one for me" is the accepted practice, and no skipper worth his command would take a vessel to sea unless he were certain of every scrap of gear aboard her—from guard-rails to whistle lanyards. So when you read of our hazardous ocean races don't feel alarmed for those fellows out there in the little ships. They're really having a hell of a good time.



VALLEY OF ACHIEVEMENT

by Hume Dow

THE world is given to talking about big rivers these days. We hear a great deal about the importance of the Danube or the Volga, the potentialities of the Amazon, or about man's great accomplishments in the Tennessee Valley. In Australia, in similar fashion, we hear much about the Murray and the Murrumbidgee. But smaller rivers, rivers which encompass more variety in the scope of a few miles, rivers in which one reach is a bit different from the next, have a quality of their own. Take the Thames at Tilbury and the Thames at Windsor, or the Hudson at 42nd Street and the Hudson at West Point. The same is true of the Seine; or, in Australia, of the Yarra. In each case, there is to be found, in the course of a few miles, great natural beauty and evidence of considerable human achievement. Tasmania's River Derwent is unquestionably beautiful, too, and, today more than ever, it is a valley of great achievement.

The Derwent is, in fact, only 107 miles in length. But there is an infinite and compelling variety between the seagulls and steam whistles of Hobart and the still waters of Lake St Clair. Even the river itself changes quickly—the foam of rapidly falling water below Butler's Gorge is only a few miles from the placid mirror of the broad, gentle stream at New Norfolk. There are false similarities, of course. Four thousand feet of Mount Wellington tower directly above Hobart and four thousand feet of Mount Olympus shadow Lake St Clair. But it is the contrasts, the diversity and the changes man has wrought, which make the valley so rare in our "wide brown land".

Begin at Hobart—a city of quiet dignity which may well be recognized more and more to rival Perth as a refuge from the urban madness of Sydney and Melbourne: A city sandwiched between the deep waters of the Derwent estuary and the abrupt slopes of Wellington; the remaining shores of the estuary, in all directions from the city, flanked by lower hills, hills which are an unending joy as they change in colour and contour with different light, and the approach or disappearance of clouds or sea mist.

Ever since the first settlers pushed their boats close in along the shoreline to avoid the congestion of sheltering whales in the centre of the stream, the beauty of Hobart's harbour has been praised by the discriminating eye. Yet, unlike most places which combine beauty

Now that the wall itself is completed, only the fitting of the installations remains. (These include a 15,000-horsepower generator.) Then the fun begins. For, above this point, the Derwent Valley broadens out over a wide area, which will be gradually flooded as the water banks up behind the dam. The engineers say that this reservoir will take seven years to fill, but that when it does the water will cover more than ten square miles. The capacity of the reservoir is calculated to be 243,000 acre-feet. That is even more than Lake St Clair itself, the source of Derwent waters.

This is the wild country, with neither habitation nor human south of the river. You can draw a line from Butler's Gorge to the southern coast of Tasmania eighty-odd miles away and find no settlement. That line would cross many an unclimbed mountain and miles of impenetrable horizontal scrub. Even following the Derwent the ten or fifteen miles from Clark Dam up to Lake St Clair, you are in rugged country, with the rough peaks of the King William Range on your left. There is no break in the virgin bush until the Lyell Highway crosses the river at Derwent Bridge on its way to the mining towns of the West Coast. A mile or two beyond the highway is the lake.

Some say this is the most beautiful of all mountain lakes, Australia's Como or Maggiore. Perhaps. Comparison seems pointless. It is sufficient satisfaction to enjoy such dramatic beauty without argument. Here the varied greens of myrtle-beech and King Billy pine divide the deep blue of bottomless still waters from the murky grey of flat-topped Mount Olympus. Great peaks jut into the sky on almost every hand, their irregular curves and precipitous cliffs carrying a thrill to the eye. Here and there the green is broken by the shining, barkless trunk of the yellow-gum or the flame of the waratah. Now and then the stillness is interrupted by the quacking of a flight of black ducks or the song of a thrush. A crescent honeyeater perched on a celery-top pine may go unnoticed as you gaze at wedge-tailed eagles cruising slowly hundreds of feet above.

Throughout Tasmania, the Australian mainlander is continually astonished by the profusion of snow-capped peaks. The Middle-Westerner must have the same reaction to his first trip through the Rockies. Such feelings of wonderment are intensified near Lake St Clair, where mountains seem crowded one upon another, one tor jutting out of the shoulder of the next.

It is a far cry from the gentle hop-fields only sixty miles down-stream, or the yachts and sandy beaches of Hobart only a hundred miles away. But there is vast achievement as well as great beauty in this brief space. Australia can take some pride in what Australians have done, and are doing, in that valley.

Australia must become a myth, before it can become a power. It must be an image in our minds around which our affections grow. The name must be able to stir our emotions and inspire our songs. This love of Australia can never be a manufactured thing, a thing called into existence for the convenience of government, or conjured up to provide a motive for education. It can only grow as love grows. If we love Australia wisely we shall be the better equipped to see her proper place among the nations.

E. H. Burgmann, M.A., Th. Soc., Bishop of Goulburn *The Education of An Australian* (Angus & Robertson.)

ON THE DOWNS

by Henry G. Lamond

THE scene is the Barkly Tableland, that vast area of rolling downs, open, treeless, intersected by ribbons of coolabah that line dry watercourses, a great nursery of the cattle-breeding industry.

Shapeless figures wrapped in calico swags lie about on the ground; a few red coals smoulder on the fire; the winds blow endlessly from the south-east—puff as they push the grass in billows before them—and, in the east, the sky pales a fraction to a light tinge of lead. Late in April, the winds are touched with the edge of ice; a migrant willy wagtail on his annual visit to the Tableland takes it on himself to announce the arrival of the day, to let the world know he is a “sweet-pretty-creature”.

One calico-covered bundle stirs internally. It splits open like a giant cocoon and a man steps out. He, fully clothed but for his boots, slips his feet into them with an action that is almost automatic. Though it is still dark, some time before daylight proper, that camp-cook goes about his routine job. He goes to one rolled swag, knowing from long practice just where to kick with effect. He turns, walks to the fire, throws back over his shoulder: “Get ’um yarraman, Snowy. Him close-up daylight.”

Snowy, an aboriginal, gropes for his boots, reaches for a bridle, and stumbling in his half-sleep goes to the fire for the quart of tea he knows the cook has ready for him. He listens as he walks, reading the message of the bells from the hobbled horses that he has to gather.

Though it is dark, the day has commenced.

The leaden halo in the east turns to a suspicion of pink as the cook bangs a couple of tin plates together and calls, with that assumption of false humour that only cooks possess at that time of the day: “Come on, you fellers. You ain’t takin’ a day off, are you? Breakfast’s ready. Tear it inter yer an’ sleep on bags.”

Each swag gives birth to a man; each man tosses a towel over his shoulder, goes stumblingly in the manner of the half-awake to the waterhole in the creek. Each man returns to his swag, replaces the towel, rolls that heap of blankets perfunctorily, and goes to the cook’s cart where breakfast is waiting.

And as day comes, when the spokes of the wheels of the cart stand out clearly, the horses come to the camp with a rattle of hobble-chains, the jingling of many bells. They stand in pairs, head-and-tail, swishing flies from each other, while the men breakfast.

The men rise after breakfast, dust the seats of their pants, and with that unhurried haste that comes from long practice they pick up their bridles, catch and saddle their horses. Bill, the head stockman, leads his team of half a dozen men out to muster. Some of the horses may be a little touchy, a bit raw and inclined to root, but that wears off quickly. The men ride out on the downs just as the first edge of the sun peeps over the rim, when the winds double their efforts, when the world is clean, sweet and pure.

Bill gives his orders: "Jack, you an' Jim go roun' by Gosling Lagoon. Swing in from there over t'wards Th' Bluebush. Pick up all th' cattle you sees. Work 'em in all th' time. Work down Th' Bluebush to th' river and drive everythin' ahead of you up it to th' camp here."

Other pairs of men are sent out. Bill knows the country, the habits of the cattle, the lie of the land. Roughly, and without geometrical precision, his sweep of musterers will clean approximately one hundred square miles of country in that morning muster. The cattle also know what a muster means. Many of them, well-worked and tractable, start in towards their usual camps as soon as they realize that musterers are on the job. Others, and many of them, know just as well the meaning of those men riding in certain directions. They exercise their small wits to do all that is contrary.

The sun rides high overhead in a clear sky, with the eternal winds picking up dust from beneath hooves, spreading it in layers that are gritty to the touch and musty to smell; the cattle stream in towards Dingo Waterholes, the place Bill always uses for a camp; hawks float above on still wings, ever on the alert to swoop on small birds, grasshoppers, or other prey disturbed from beneath the hooves of the cattle; the ground rumbles under their tread, the air is rocked by their bellowing as they string in and go towards Dingo Waterholes. The men, with an occasional call and crack of a whip, see their charges safely to the water, camped under the shades of the coolabahs; after giving their horses a drink they turn and ride to the camp that is scattered about the cook's dray.

The "camp". A camp may mean a place where men gather; it may mean a rest or a sleep; it may mean a body of men; it may be a place where cattle come together; it is the name of the place where cattle are worked. It may have other meanings as a noun. As an adjective it is applied to camp-ovens, -horses, -cooks, -mail, and many other things. "Camp" is a generic word of many meanings. It is so typical of station life that the sense would be destroyed if another word were used in its place.

The cattle go to their dinner-camp on the waterhole. Bulls roam in search of fresh conquests, alert for battle; calves, as with the young of other animals, sneak into strange places, get into mischief; cows lie and chew the cud, surely they gossip amongst themselves, bandy scandal and relate choice information; bullocks raise their weak tenor voices, lower them an octave in imitation of a bull's challenge; heifers, the female teen-agers of the bovine world, flirt outrageously and pretend coyness, which would serve as an example to their human counterparts.

The men finish their lunch, smoke, yarn, dust the seats of their trousers as they rise to catch the horses they will ride on camp.

Dodger, the camp-horse, is a special friend of Bill, the head stockman. At any other time Dodger would nose Bill's hand while he rubbed tobacco; that gelding would stand beside Bill and use the man's body as a rubbing-post to ease a fly-stung eye; he would take a crust of damper from Bill's hand and follow him about for more. But when those cattle are in the distance, and all that can be seen or heard of them is the haze of dust from their

hooves and the low rumble of their lowing in the air, then Dodger has other ideas. He pretends that Bill is an ogre, a fiend, another name for death. He will not let Bill go near him. Though Bill is the only man who ever rides Dodger, when cattle are on camp another man has to catch the horse—he just will not let Bill near him: he doesn't like the look of Bill; the smell of him is distasteful to Dodger.

The fresh horses are saddled and mounted. Dodger, quiet, staid, exemplary in his conduct, has an attack of nerves: he humps his back, sidles away, pretends to buck when Bill mounts him. As they ride towards the cattle Dodger plays the fool: he reefs and rears; he tries to break away; he seems almost to plead with his rider: "I can't go among them cattle, Bill! I'm frightened of 'em! I never worked cattle in me life, Bill. I'm not a camp-horse. I know nothin' about cuttin' out."

"Hairt, you old fool!" Bill admonishes his mount, giving him a light rake with the spurs. "Stand up to it!"

Dodger lifts his head, surveys the cattle that are being put on camp, pricks his ears and again he seems to address his rider: "There's a mob of cattle over there, Bill! I only just seen 'em! This is the job for you an' me, th' two-feller, Bill! This is where we shine!"

Dodger stretches out freely as he, and the other horses, drive the cattle from the coolabahs and put them on a flat clay-pan that is used as a camp. The cattle rise from their rest, stretch themselves, bellow for lost mates, while anxious mothers call to their calves. Many of the herd walk resignedly to the place where they know the work is to be done; others, just as wise, more sinister in their outlook, try devious means to sneak away and upset the general orderliness of the mob.

The cattle are put on camp—about fifteen hundred of them. They are a mixed herd: bulls, bullocks, steers, weaners of both sexes, nuggets, mickeys, and plain cleanskins—the last three are unbranded calves aged from eighteen months to that many days. There are cows, heifers, breeders and barren, and all classes of bovine femininity. That is a mixed mob.

Joe and Jim take the back of the camp; Alick and Bob, well-mounted, work on the face; Snowy is given the job of "holding the cut"—cattle that are cut out from the main mob; a couple of other men work on the wings. Bill rises in his stirrups, looks over the mob and estimates them; he makes a mental note of the number of fat bullocks running in the area from which the mob was gathered; he balances the number and quality of the bulls, the percentage of calves, the general well-being and health of the whole mob. It is all done subconsciously. A quick question fired at him about any of those particulars would receive a negative response; yet, at any time up to the next muster, he could draw on his mental snapshots and give itemized details of the cattle.

Dodger has another attack of nerves: "I can't go among them cattle, Bill!" he seems to protest. "Square dinkum, me heart wouldn't stand th' strain! I'm frightened of 'em, Bill! Give me something else to do—anythin' at all—but don't ask me to work on camp! I'm too old for that now, Bill!"

Bill straightens the old fellow up to it: he grips him with his thighs, lends him courage by his light hand on the rein.

Dodger responds: he takes hold of the bit with his teeth, shakes his wise head, steps into the mob sure in the knowledge that he is a monarch at his work, a horse among horses. His heart pounds against the calves of this rider's legs—an indication of his pleasurable excitement. He knows! He will do his work!

Bill rides into the camp and the cattle edge away from his horse as he rides among them. The rules are simple, dictated by common sense: easy cattle first; leave rogues till last; don't disturb the camp unnecessarily; work quietly; in a duel between man and beast the man must emerge the winner—that was an imperative rule: the man must assert his superiority.

Bill selects a roan cow with a young red calf. They are on the face of the camp, easy to get; the calf is so young that, in the muddle of a disturbed camp, it might lose its mother and not have the strength to find her again—she had to come out first. That was easy: Dodger worked her to the face, pushed her clear, and a man working on the face drove her over to the cut that Snowy was holding.

Bill took out twenty or thirty cows with calves. While Dodger was still on his toes, reefing at the reins, eager for more, he called to Bob: "You got a idea, Bob, that Flirt what you're ridin's a good mare. Give her a try on twen'y or thirty."

Bob took out his quota of easy cattle. Alick went in for a spell. Three or four men, on three or four good horses with the ability to cut out, were given a trial. The camp dwindled down until there were only about thirty branders left—cunning cows with half-grown calves; bigger mickies without mothers; cattle that needed care in working.

Bill gathered Dodger together, swung him with his thighs.

Dodger needed no telling. This was his work. He knew he had to go in again and clean up the camp. He arched his neck, took hold of the bit, and walked in confidently, head swinging, tail swaying from side to side.

Bill and Dodger took out several cattle that had to be edged to the face; they stood irresolute for a second. Dodger knew that: he charged with a quick patter of racing hooves; forced those hesitant cattle clear of the mob, and worked in behind them so that they could not break back.

A man working on the face swooped in between those cattle and the mob, edged them over, and drove them to the cut.

The last beast was a half-grown nugget, a brindle rogue, full of the importance of youth and the arrogance of sex. He repeatedly avoided the man on camp; he worked back at every opportunity; his small mind might have considered each time another was taken that it was a win for his own perverted self. He was hot, a little flushed with success, inclined to be impertinent.

Dodger worked that young bull carefully from the back of the camp. Bill's thighs might have spoken to Dodger, let him know each impending move on the part of the stag. Dodger, perhaps, had an inkling of those moves even before Bill let him know of them. He, Dodger, watched the beast's eyes. Bill knew that a beast invariably rolled its eyes in the direction it intended to go one fraction of a second before it made a move. Dodger might have been guided by an animal sense unknown to Bill. Between the two of them they forestalled every move the brindle made, worked him forward, had him on the edge of the face. Then, as he stood irresolute, that quick scamper of hooves took him off guard: he darted forward, and was forced clear before he understood the manoeuvre.

The brindle shot forward in an effort to regain the safety of the mob. He shot from a standing start with the suddenness of a bullet. And not one flick of a second behind him, as instantaneously, Dodger ranged beside him, lay up on his shoulder, forced him out! Further, smart as that mickey was, Dodger could play with him for pace.

The brindle stopped as if he had run into a stone wall; he pivoted on his hind legs,

slipped as he shot up dust, turned in one action and was racing as desperately in the opposite direction.

And Dodger, his rider swaying with him, anticipated that move! He was up beside that young bull in two strides, forcing him out, a barrier between him and the mob.

The brindle took it in long runs of about fifty yards, while Dodger played with him for pace, and held him even on the turns.

The brindle tried it in short snaps of about ten yards. Dodger revelled in the joke—as it was to him.

The brindle rolled in his stride, and became sullen, and Dodger, to show his superiority, leant over, took the nape of the bull's neck in his teeth, and shook him to show his indignation.

The brindle bellowed his rage and pain. He bellowed again when Bill swung his whip, let the thunder of its crack rock about him, and the sear of its lightning bite his hide.

The bull knew he had met his masters: he turned, strings of saliva floating from his jaws, low rumbles of protest in his throat, and trotted over to the cut held by Snowy.

Bill reined in Dodger, checking him as he started to go into the mob again. He called to the men: "Joe, you an' Jim hol' th' mob till they quietens down. Then you can let 'em draw in to water and feed out on th' plain. After they've had a drink you can let 'em go an' come back to th' camp."

No orders were needed for the other men: they knew the routine. They followed Bill on Dodger as he rode over to the mob of cows and calves Snowy had in hand, which were resting under some scattered trees out from the billabongs. The men knew, without any word being spoken, that they had to take those cattle to the yards on the other side of the channels, and yard them in readiness for a daylight start at branding in the morning.

Apart from trivial matters of that sort, the day's work was done.

HARRY PEARCE

by David Campbell

*I sat beside the red stock route
And chewed a blade of bitter grass
And saw in mirage on the plain
A bullock wagon pass.
Old Harry Pearce was with his team.
"The flies are bad," I said to him.*

*The leaders felt his whip. It did
Me good to hear old Harry swear,
And in the heat of noon it seemed
His bullocks walked on air.
Suspended in the amber sky
They hauled the wool to Gundagai.*

*He walked in Time across the plain,
An old man walking in the air,
For years he wandered in my brain;
And now he lodges here.
And he may drive his cattle still
When Time with us has had his will.*



ON MAKING FILMS

by James Chanter

FILM production in Australia is not exactly a novelty, but it is something of a shock to realize that Australia has had the trappings of an industry for almost half a century. Of all our infant industries this has been the problem child, an industrial baby that has obstinately refused to grow up. Over the last few years, however, the previously retarded infant seems to have been learning faster than ever before. There are signs of brilliant adolescence and the promise of a rapid attainment of maturity. Films may soon be telling the national story, giving clues to the national soul. This kind of high optimism has often been felt before, but at least this time there's solid ground for high hope. Films like *The Overlanders*, *Bush Christmas*, *Eureka Stockade*, and a whole host of more than ordinary quality documentary films proclaim that the industry is now on a reasonably firm foundation.

As far back as 1905 Australians were making films, and at that time as film-makers they had no superiors anywhere. They had one priceless asset that gave them a lead: the immortal Ned Kelly and his gang. A few Melbourne film tyros decided that Ned's exploits were worth recording in this newest medium, and they proceeded to make and complete the first feature film in the world. It must have been a box-office success, for the producers decided that bushrangers were the stuff of fine films and paying films. There followed in quick succession *Robbery Under Arms*, *Eureka Stockade*, *Dan Morgan*, *Thunderbolt* and many others that glorified Australian lawlessness, even though for the sake of propriety the police shot their way through in the final flicker.

Of all the causes of our film futility none lies so deep as lack of continuity of production, and lack of courage to forswear techniques and attitudes derived from what is after all a foreign country. This is the lesson that we are grimly learning today, but with better understanding than before.

In one field, however, Australians did make a name for themselves. With a vast network of theatres spread over three million square miles it was impossible to put weekly news-reels before the public all over the country at one time. That is, of course, before air dispatch became possible. Consequently the Australian news-reel men developed a form of news-reel containing spot news items and background stories as well. In effect a novel kind of news-reel magazine was developed by two companies specializing in the field: Fox Movietone and

Cinesound. Deftly constructed and interesting, Australian news-reels are as good, if not better, than anything of the kind in the world. Apart from these two ventures and the sporadic attempts at feature production by one of these companies, Cinesound, and the usual crop of mushroom shows, there were few opportunities for entrance into the industry. This poverty of production meant practically no opportunities for training aspiring technicians. Furthermore, the news-reel workers themselves became highly specialized, too highly specialized for the industry's ultimate good in other directions.

What is the position of production today? First there's the old guard. Two men have tried persistently to make good films in this country: Charles Chauvel and Ken G. Hall.

Of the two, Chauvel seems to have a glimmering of the shining prospect. He senses the possibilities of the Australian idiom, and strives to obtain it in his subjects. *Forty Thousand Horsemen* and *Rats of Tobruk*, two of his best-known productions, had a touch of it here and there. Ken G. Hall, on the other hand, has made a number of very successful productions, so far as the box-office goes. The saga of *Dad and Dave* still plays in the outback and still makes merry in the box-office. Of all the Hall epics *Smithy*, the story of Sir Charles Kingsford Smith, is the best of his efforts.

During the second world war Australia's few film technicians were spread as far and wide as the theatres of war. They gained valuable experience of oversea conditions and developed their news-reel technique still further. One or two of them showed that they had learnt something of the documentary technique, the style of film-making that made British war films famous. All this was very valuable.

In 1945, with war practically at an end, Harry Watt came to Australia. Watt had worked with John Grierson, the father of documentary, who saw the possibility of the dramatic treatment of reality in film. Watt had himself made *Target for Tonight* and *London Can Take It*, those two unforgettable documentaries of English courage that made an unequalled filmic contribution to the total struggle. Watt with his *Nine Men* had taken his documentary technique into feature production. He cast his eye around the Australian scene.

After eight months of intelligent appreciation he chose his subject. He would immortalize the cattle treks from the north made by a dozen cattle men when the Jap threat to Australia looked like certain invasion. In his story he would combine the best of their common adventures; fundamentally his tale would be a documentary story, an essentially truthful one. The whole thing called for interpretative insight, prodigious preparation and immense human effort. Watt took a mixed team of imported and Australian technicians and actors and actresses into the continental centre and made his film.

The world-wide success of *The Overlanders* was the greatest stimulus to film production this country has ever had. Whatever its defects, here was a first-class film, one that somehow had got close to the heart of a country and its people. Ealing then gave Ralph Smart, another Englishman with a documentary inclination, the chance to film a children's story, *Bush Christmas*. Here was something even more heart-warming in its own lovable fashion than *The Overlanders*. Watt came again and finished *Eureka Stockade* and now Ralph Smart is to make an Australian comedy.

This film, tentatively titled *Bitter Springs*, more so perhaps than its predecessors, *The Overlanders* and *Eureka Stockade*, carries the burden of really stabilizing the future of Australian feature production. Another success and Ealing will have no further doubts; a failure could perhaps rebound disastrously:

Since *The Overlanders* so inflated box-office returns, American interest in Australia has

changed from stifled yawning to perceptible thought. Australia tickles a few American fancies, and a further encouragement to production activity is the niggling thought of dollar balances languishing in the grip of the Australian Treasury.

To return to 1945, the crisis year in Australian films: in that year the Australian Government created the Australian National Film Board. Its purpose was briefly to produce documentary, factual and educational films for the nation and for the purposes of adult education. Behind the plan lay the drive of John Grierson, who had visited Australia at the outbreak of war and had submitted a report calling for the establishment of Government documentary film units.

By a fortuitous circumstance Ralph Foster, of the Canadian National Film Board, who was temporarily with the Canadian High Commissioner in Canberra, was loaned to Australia as Film Commissioner for twelve months.

Foster's first job was to gather human material with which to make films. For a nucleus he had the existing Film Division of the Department of Information, composed mostly of cameramen and technicians who had done a grand job of war coverage. Next he recruited a small band of men and women who seemed to have a flair for films. But Foster saw that he needed an experienced documentary film-maker to train and guide youthful Australian enthusiasts. He induced Stanley Hawes, chief of the non-theatrical division of the Canadian National Film Board, to come to Australia as producer-in-chief. When Foster's term ended Hawes carried on.

Within a year his influence was sharply underscored. His own film, *School in the Mail Box*, was runner-up for the Documentary Oscar of its year. John Heyer made three or four films that won oversea applause. Other films such as *Watch Over Japan*, *Whither Japan*, and *Namatjira the Painter* followed, and all were given fine receptions. Behind this rapid success lay the quiet persistence and unlimited patience of Stanley Hawes.

After two years of film-making in odd studios all over Sydney, Hawes succeeded in establishing a home for his documentary team. At Burwood the Film Division is making films in studios that are thoroughly suited to documentary production.

Output, however, is far less important than the salient fact that at last we have a film-making body where technicians can be thoroughly trained. Great films are made by those with a thorough technical background. Never before have Australians been able to obtain the training in the cutting room and the field without which there can be no real progress. Hawes has under his wing young men and women who may be the David Leans, Alfred Hitchcocks and Mary Fields of Australia. Already many have shown talent above an ordinary pitch. No one is more acutely conscious of the importance of his task than the quiet little Englishman who, in three short years, has done more for Australian films than any other single individual.

Like Watt, Hawes has sensed the spread of the documentary canvas that this urgent nation presents. He sees that this nation in the building clamours for the expression of its growth and effort on film. He points to the imponderable influence that films by their very stimulus to thought and ideas may have upon the country. Films of interpretation, information and exposition can widen a people's vision. Hawes intends to see that this shall be done.

Here in a Government film-production agency lies the brightest hope for an industry that may, at long last, have some national and international significance. Given encouragement there are no bounds to the future of film in Australia.



FILMS—Other Australian companies are busy filming aspects of the national life, bringing a modern and realistic approach to such out-of-the-way occupations as crocodile-hunting in the tropical rivers of the North.



*So Clancy rode to wheel them—he was
racing on the wing
Where the best and boldest riders take
their place,
And he raced his stock-horse past them,
and he made the ranges ring
With the stockwhip, as he met them face
to face*

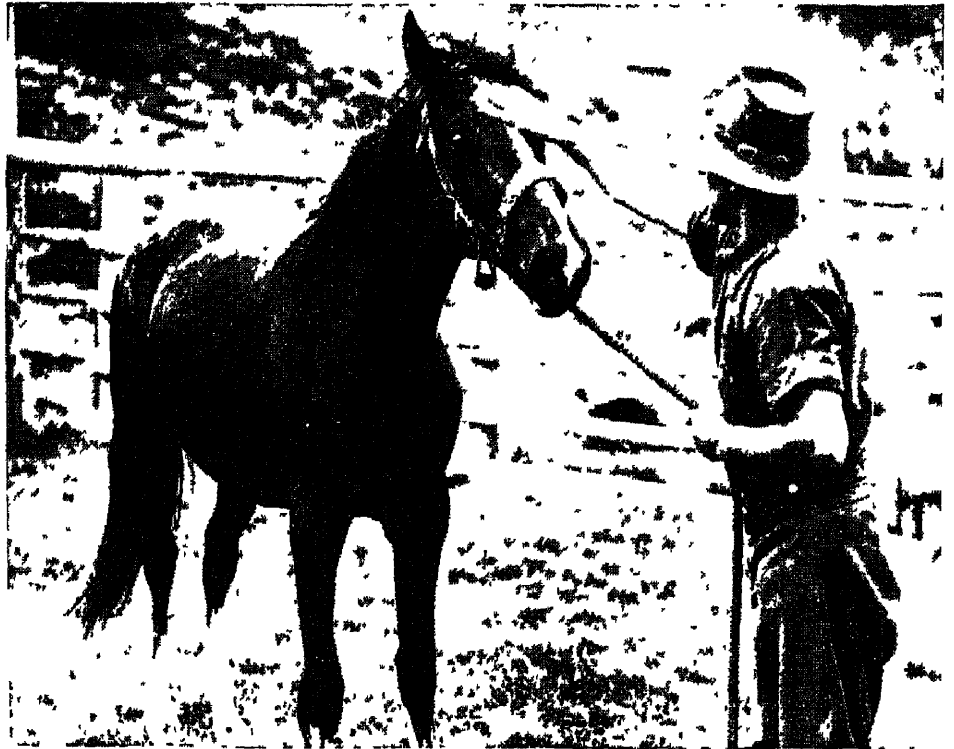
A. B. "(BANJO)" PATERSON

WILD HORSES—Upon the rugged
mountain slopes above the Snowy

River, as upon the everlasting plains
of the inland, the wild horses that men
call brumbies roam at liberty in their
hundreds. Each spring, after the snow
has melted, stockmen go out to run
them in, an adventure that calls for
much hard and skilful riding. Banjo
Paterson's "Man From Snowy River"
typifies the rough-riding horsemen who
capture, handle and break-in these
brumbies, spirited animals that make
fine stock horses for working sheep
and cattle.

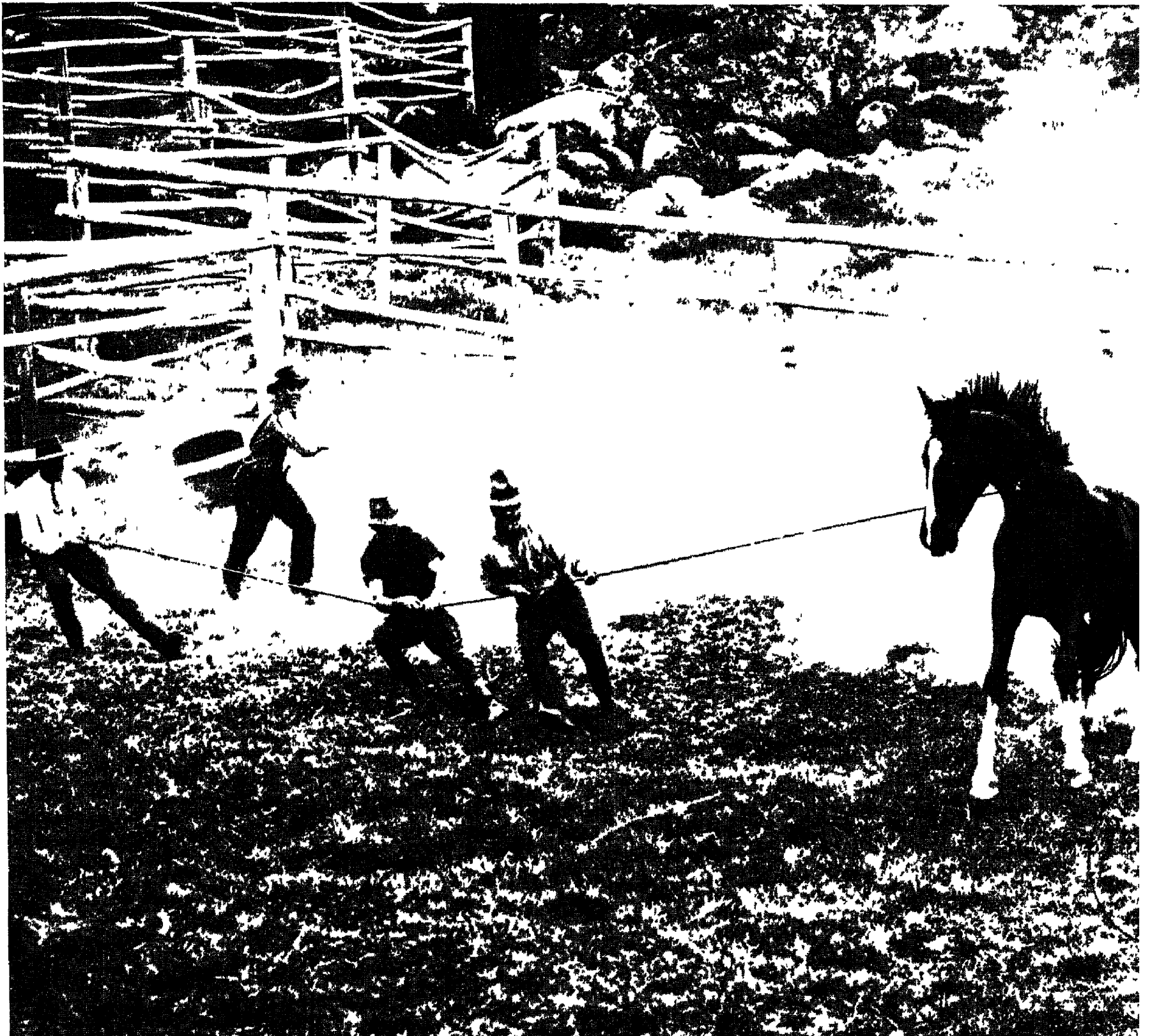
men run in a brumby mob by using several broken-in station horses as leaders.





Patience and sympathetic handling are needed before the captive brumby is broken-in.

The stallion leader of the brumby mob does not yield easily to efforts to domesticate him.





MARSUPIALS—Quaint and lovable are the words most commonly used to describe the koala. The baby is carried in mother's snug pouch until he is big enough to ride safely on her back. These gentle creatures are threatened with extinction.

Kangaroos are beautiful to watch as they hop along with great rhythmic leaps. Hops of up to twenty feet are common when they are travelling fast, and leaps of up to forty feet have been reported. They also carry their young in pouches.



CREATURES OF THE BUSH

by Ellis Troughton, F.R.Z.S., C.M.Z.S.

THE Australian continent has sometimes been described as a vast museum of living fossils, which is true enough when applied to creatures like the platypus and spiny ant-eater. Most primitive of living mammals, they actually retain traces of reptilian ancestry in the shoulder-parts of their skeletons. Recalling the dawn of the mammal's development from the age of reptiles, the platypus emphasizes the long isolation of the continent, probably for more than one hundred million years. All our furred migrants must have travelled by rafts of debris over narrowed waterways, and by prehistoric land-bridges that disappeared before large carnivores appeared, to follow and prey upon them. In the relatively peaceful isolation of their strange new world, the ancestral pouched animals evolved an army of marsupial types.

Although the platypus is now known to be a true mammal, imagine the excitement aroused by the first badly preserved specimen to reach England. This was after its discovery on the banks of the Hawkesbury River in 1797. Various known as a watermole, duckbill, and even duckmole, the platypus has often been described, even to this day, as a sort of fantastic composite of reptile, fish, bird, and mammal. Only after almost a century of argument was its mammalian status accepted.

Nowadays most people realize that the platypus is not truly amphibious. It breathes ordinary air, and will drown if kept under water for more than three minutes. It is also a warm-blooded animal, which suckles its young after their premature appearance from a leathery shell. The so-called "duck-bill" is really a combination of the nose and lips of higher mammals, specially adapted for gathering such food as worms, prawns, insects and their larvae. The hand-webs are not at all like those of a duck's feet, because they can be expanded beyond the fingers to form swimming paddles, or folded back under the palm to free the broad nails for burrowing.

The breeding burrows, which may be from ten to sixty feet long, are excavated by the female. The nesting-chamber may be lined with grass, leaves or reeds crushed by its toothless but bony jaws. Submerged entrances are never used, because the platypus prefers to go in dry, spending some time on the bank squeezing water out of her fur.

Retiring to lay her eggs, the platypus cunningly plugs the burrow at intervals with earth. This habit baffled early investigators as well as the platypus's enemy the python. The

small eggs are not brittle like those of birds, the embryonic covering being soft and leathery. During the incubation period the mother curls her body round the eggs and the milk-flow is stimulated by the spasmodic movements of her newly hatched young. The milk of the platypus exudes from enlarged breast-pores instead of teats, another reason why this quaint creature was not thought to be a mammal. Soon after their discovery, platypuses were killed in large numbers for their exquisite seal-like fur, valued highly for making coats and rugs. About fifty years ago it was protected by law throughout Tasmania and the eastern States; otherwise it would have faced extinction within two centuries.

The spiny ant-eater, relative of the platypus, is often incorrectly known as the "native porcupine" or "hedgehog", because Nature has given it a somewhat similar armour of sharp spines or quills. Unlike the platypus, the spiny ant-eater does not dig burrows, but relies for protection on its ability to gouge itself down into the earth, its quills repelling attack from above. Nature seems to have anticipated the marsupial by providing the female with a temporary brood-pouch, into which she is believed to lay her egg by some remarkable contortion of the soft under-parts. The infant is carried in this improvised perambulator, suckling milk from the enlarged pores. When its quills develop, the youngster is conveniently parked in mother's usual nest in a hollow log, or a hole under a stump or rock.

Because of their secretive habit and lack of teats, neither the platypus nor the ant-eater were accepted for many years by scientists as true mammals. Yet the controversy as to whether they laid eggs was more prolonged. Even the aborigines confused the eggs of reptiles and birds with those of the platypus. Despite a published report that two small compressible eggs were found in a box confining a platypus overnight, the question of egg-laying was debated for about eighty years. The matter was finally settled in 1884 when Caldwell, a zoologist sent out by Cambridge University, dramatically announced by cable to a meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Montreal that he had found both types of eggs in Queensland.

The kangaroo has aroused endless discussion about the "mystery" of marsupial birth, because of the amazing disparity in size between the newly-born and its parent. The premature method of birth is characteristic of the entire marsupial order. In the higher mammals, sustenance for the unborn is provided by the placental or "navel-cord" connexion with the parental bloodstream, but this union is rudimentary in marsupials, and almost entirely absent in kangaroos. The embryo is mainly dependent upon a yolk-sac, which is soon absorbed, thus being born in a premature state. To allow for this Nature has evolved its unique method of feeding and transportation.

Even before the discovery of kangaroos, there were similar arguments about the way American opossums were born, the question being further confused by Red Indian legends about their procreation. Not till 1806 did Professor Barton of Philadelphia publish his, the first, observations on the unaided journey of marsupial young. The sightless young opossums, he wrote, found their way to the teats by an invariable instinct. It was not true, as often asserted, that the mother placed the young in the pouch with her mouth or paws. In 1920 Dr Carl Hartmann confirmed the fact that young opossums are born with the mother in a sitting position. They then crawl up about three inches through her fur with a clinging overarm action, enter the pouch and attach themselves to the teats. Proof that the young are not born there is that, when Australian marsupials such as the ring-tail possums and native cats are born, they frequently exceed the number of teats. The losers in this instinctive marathon usually cling by their mouths to the tails of more fortunate fellows, and their

remains are afterwards seen in the pouch. Because of their hopping action, the kangaroos were the first Australian pouched animals seen and described by explorers and naturalists. This action evidently evolved from the efforts of small ancestral creatures to catch their insect prey, while dodging the attacks of reptiles, birds, and their flesh-eating fellows. Thus the kangaroo family gradually assumed a semi-erect posture, with slight fore-limbs and grasping hands, the hind-limbs greatly enlarged as powerful springs. As they leap speedily over the countryside they use their stout yet pliant tails as a rudder and counterpoise, or as the third leg of a tripod when they prop to survey the scene on tiptoes.

Unfortunately many smaller kinds of kangaroos have been exterminated or drastically reduced by the inroads of settlement and by the introduced fox. It is therefore not generally realized that there were more than fifty species, ranging from the miniature rat-kangaroos to the great-grey or Forester, and the red "roo" of the vast inland plains. But it was from the western coast of Australia, some 150 years before Captain Cook arrived, that the Dutch navigator Pelsart provided the first known account of a wallaby or small kangaroo, his ship having been wrecked near what is now known as Geraldton. Misled by the small size of the pouch-young Pelsart wrote that "it seems certain that they grow there out of the nipples of the mammae, from which they draw their food".

It is difficult to picture the remarkable variety of the kangaroo family within the age-old isolation of Australia and New Guinea. The smallest, known as rat-kangaroos, retain a partly insectivorous diet, while the larger rock-wallabies eat the roots of plants as well as leaves and grasses. The quaint tree-kangaroos of Cape York Peninsula and New Guinea have shortened hind-limbs, having reverted to the leafy diet and tree-haunts of their primitive ancestors. The more typical members of the family, small scrub or pademelon wallabies, medium-sized brush-wallabies and the largest kangaroos, grew up in large numbers, taking the place of hoofed animals such as deer and cattle in other lands:

When the rabbit was introduced it destroyed most of the uncultivated food resources, forcing wallabies and kangaroos on to pasture-lands in bad seasons. This led to a false belief in the rapid increase of the slow-breeding marsupials and, coupled with the demand for their skins, encouraged indiscriminate slaughter. Today several beautiful species have been exterminated altogether. The kangaroo shares pride of place with the emu on our national coat-of-arms, because of its world-wide interest, yet tragically enough the entire family is in desperate need of protection.

The monkey-like possums or phalangers, mostly with clinging tails, derive their family name from the specialized climbing structure of their digits, the phalanges of hands and feet. Captain Cook's naturalists applied the Red Indian name "opossum" to the leaf-eating ring-tail collected at Cooktown, but the true American opossums are carnivorous feeders more akin in habits to our native "cats". Our smallest phalangers include the insectivorous pigmy-possums, known as "dormice" to the early settlers, and the little honey-possum of south-western Australia, which thrusts its trunk-like snout and brushy tongue into blossoms and round banksia cones after nectar and pollen, like a honey-eating bird.

Some of our phalanger-possums have evolved a kind of gliding flight by means of skin-flaps between the limbs, a similar development to flying squirrels overseas. The smallest of the glider-possums is the mouse-like feather-tail glider, and next in size come the sugar- and squirrel-gliders, and largest of all, the possum- or greater-glider, which may make downward glides of 120 yards. Best known of our phalangers is doubtless the "common" grey or brush-tail possum. The brush-tail's rich fur caused the trade to exploit it heavily in

the past, but there is now a growing official tendency to limit open seasons, which were often based on spurious claims of the possum's destructiveness. Largest of the phalangers is the cuscus, which occasionally inspires false reports of monkeys on Cape York Peninsula because of its rounded face, short ears, and partly naked prehensile tail.

The koala, that unique and lovable marsupial, which has been most inappropriately called a "native bear", is usually regarded as a tailless member of the phalanger family. However, some of its unique anatomical features warrant placing it in a family of its own. The popular name "koala" is based on an aboriginal word implying that it seldom drinks, apparently gaining enough moisture from dew and from its gum-leaf diet. Like the brush-tail, the harmless slow-breeding koala has proved no match for the hazards of settlement, including slaughter for its beautiful fur. Thanks to its shrinking environment in the eastern States, it is in desperate need of forest reservations where it may browse in peace.

The marsupial wombat, known as a "badger" to the early settlers, who ate the smoked flesh, which they likened to pork, is somewhat like a beaver minus a tail. Because of its stocky build and shovel-like nails it is well equipped for digging large burrows, which may eventually link up into tunnels up to one hundred feet long. It makes comfortable nests with bark and the grasses that, with tender roots and fungi, form its diet. In its wild state the wombat seems to be the original "grumpy" amongst marsupials, but only the female is aggressive when her single young is in the pouch or running alongside her. Unfortunately, because of damage to fencing and crops, and the deep-tunnelling that endangers stock and affects rabbit-control, wombats have been driven from most of their mainland haunts. But the quaint marsupial is just as interesting zoologically as the koala, and the young grow into affectionate and amusing pets for children, so that tolerance should be shown wherever possible, and every effort made to conserve small colonies in suitable sanctuaries.

The bandicoots, ranging in size from a large rat to a hare, are easily confused with the smallest kangaroos because of their elongated hopping feet, though running on all-fours when hurried. They form a separate family of marsupials. The popular name "bandicoot", meaning "pig-rat", really applies to a species of rodent common to southern India and Ceylon. The name was apparently first used for the Australian marsupial by the explorer Bass in 1799, because of the outward similarity.

The common eastern Australian species is the long-nosed bandicoot. Well known in suburban gardens about Sydney, it is often condemned as an intermediate host of the dog-tick, and for the uprooting of seedlings while digging after insect-food. Since the cone-shaped diggings are really made to extract beetle-grubs by its finely tapered snout, the bandicoot may be regarded as useful.

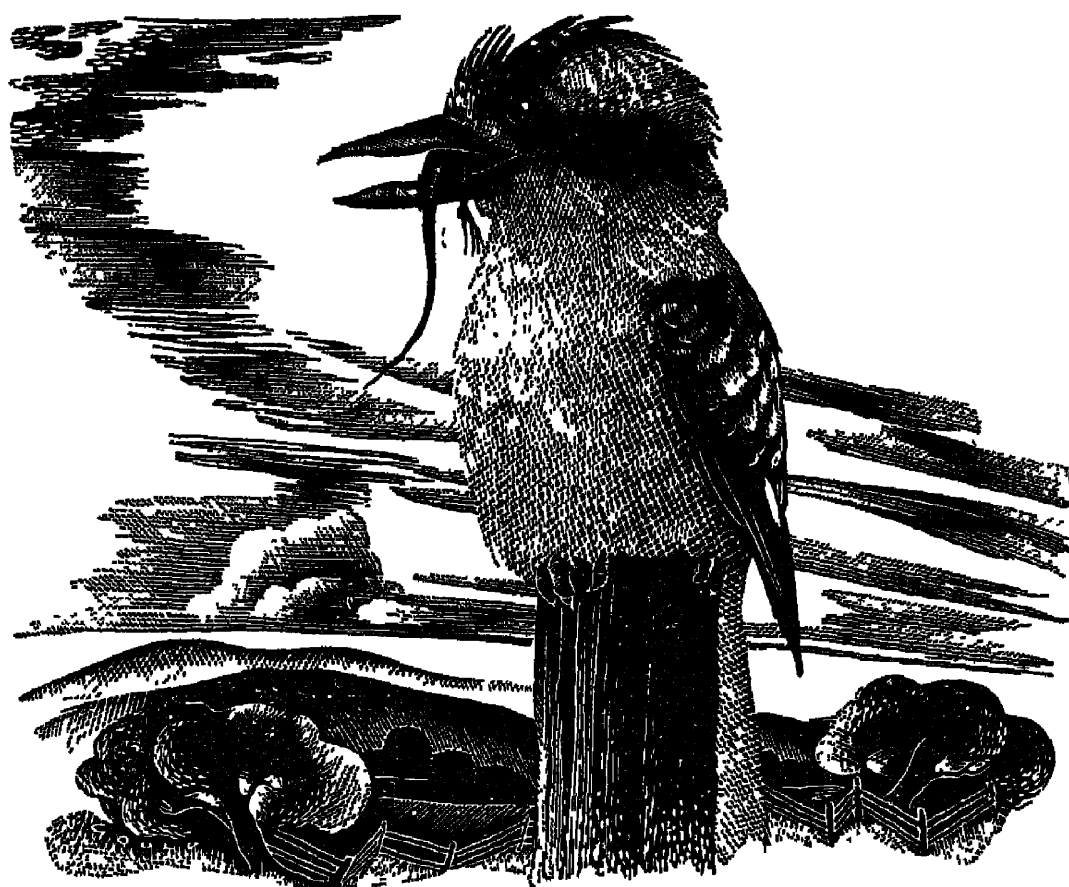
Of the predatory animals in Australia, the fox, cat and domesticated dog were introduced by white settlers, while the wild dog (the "dingo" or "warragul" of the aborigines) came with some native race in prehistoric times. The so-called pouched mice and rats are the smallest of the predatory marsupials, consuming not only grasshoppers and other insects, but killing lizards, small birds and common mice. They can be distinguished from small rodents by their finely tapered snouts, and have several upper and lower front teeth instead of paired chisel-incisors.

The spotted marsupials known as native and tiger "cats" are more like the American opossums or weasels in their predatory habits. They like the blood of poultry, returning to the kill many times, but are otherwise useful feeders on grasshoppers, rats, mice, and young

rabbits. A larger, rather bear-like marsupial is the Tasmanian Devil, so-called because of its black coloration with a few large white marks. It makes fierce attacks on poultry, though its young are amiable pets. The Tasmanian wolf or marsupial tiger, which is the size of a large dog, is probably the largest carnivorous pouched animal of all time. Originally preying on native birds and animals, the "tiger" became a destroyer of sheep and poultry. Hunted to the verge of extinction, it has survived in the dense forests of southern Tasmania, thanks to its secretive habits and camouflage stripes. Though greatly feared by early settlers, it will not attack man unless hopelessly cornered, but fights dogs to the death. The female may have four young attached to teats within her pouch for upwards of three months.

The evolution and tragic decline of our marsupials can be divided into three periods of history. Firstly, those prehistoric ages when even great climatic and geological changes failed to check their spread; then the long occupation of the country by aborigines, who did not disrupt the balance of nature; and by violent contrast we arrive at the relatively infinitesimal and last, the brief period of the white men's occupation with his inevitable destructiveness.

If the fierce competition of the dingo banished the pouched wolf from the mainland, what hope remains for the smaller or more timid creatures when their haunts have been invaded by the wily fox, and denuded by the all-pervading rabbit? Their hope of salvation depends upon a general realization that, because the continent's ancient isolation has produced the gentlest, least harmful of furred animals the world knows, they should be carefully conserved.





MOSAIC OF THE DARK

by Ernestine Hill

BETWEEN all of you, help me. I wish to tell you be quick, I feel my bones are dying. I am always in the dark.”

Joe Maregoni read it aloud, stumbling into English the Italian scrawl of his friend a thousand feet deep in the earth and a hundred feet under the water, one of the strangest letters ever delivered into a living hand. The crowd swayed in to hear.

Modesto Varischetti was still alive! Seven days in the drowned mine, alive. A shiver of wind over the plain carried away a cheer. A sunset cloud shone like a nugget of gold—Coolgardie gold.

The messenger from death to life crawled up out of the yellow sludge, goggled head and motion slow, as one from another world, a deep-sea diver in the desert of Australia, eerie and real—Diver Frank Hughes.

For five days the crowd had watched his bubbles as he groped through flooded tunnels and drives nine and ten levels down, carrying food, light, the faith and help of friends, trying to find the lonely entombed man—Varischetti, swept up in a rise, crouched like a bat in the slime of the rocks above the black water, listening, peering, praying in Italian for one faint ray of hope in the mosaic of the dark.

On 19 May 1907, just forty-two years ago tonight as I write, the Westralia mine at Bonnievale, seven miles from Coolgardie, was engulfed by a cloudburst. In that nearly rainless land, four inches of rain in an hour levelled the light sandhills and poured them in a Niagara down the drives. A hundred and fifty men were waiting to go on shift, forty were down, when the million-gallon torrent swirled into the main shaft, cascaded the slopes, filled all the stopes like honey-cells in a hive. For three hours men climbed and swam, coming up

on the skips half-drowned in slime. All save Varischetti, thirty feet up from the tenth level, a thousand feet down and three hundred and sixty feet in. No answer to his name on the roll. But he might be alive.

Josiah Crabb, Inspector of Mines in charge of the rescue, saw tell-tale bubbles in the brimming main shaft, air leaking from the levels through porous earth, waters rising below. With swift presence of mind he set the compressors in action, forcing a stream of air down through the pipes to No. 10 level and up through the tube of Varischetti's drill. Escaping into the tiny rise where the man was trapped, the air would form a pressure lock, keeping the waters down, and giving the poor wretch enough to breathe—if he were still there. It was a battle between Crabb and the unknown, a theoretical means of saving a human life. But the mine would be flooded for ten days, and the man had only his miner's "crib", food for a day.

No pumps, the skips were beginning to bale—at the rate of nine inches in twenty-four hours, a long job there—when Crabb hurried to his Coolgardie home to telegraph to the Mines Department in Perth. His seven-year-old son listened as he told the news to his wife, of the miner imprisoned in the waters, no hope of reaching him.

"Dad," said the little boy, with his picture-book mind, "why don't you get a diver to go down?"

For three silent minutes Inspector Crabb looked steadily at his son, pondering the impossible, working it out. That night he telegraphed Perth for a diver.

A diver for the waterless wastes, to save a life—the story was a sensation. Curtis and Hearne from Fremantle were raced to Coolgardie with officials and reporters, three hundred and fifty miles by record non-stop special train. From all over the goldfields a great crowd gathered to watch them go down . . . but the marine divers knew nothing of mines. Time and again their air-pipes fouled, their life-lines tangled.

Frank Hughes came out of the crowd, a Welsh miner from Boulder who had been a diver nineteen years before.

"Give me the suit," he said, "and I'll go down."

Avoiding main-shaft and machinery with eight hundred feet of hose he crawled down the shoot to No. 9 and along the pass under eighty feet of water to No. 10 level, but he could not make the rise. For three days he tried, Curtis working the air-pumps, Hearne following down. He shook the tube of Varischetti's drill three times with no reply. On the fourth day he distinctly heard the tap of a Gympie hammer, muffled in the rock.

"Burn-burn-boo-loo-loo. . . . Burn-burn-boo-loo-loo . . ." all over the goldfields the buried miner's call.

"I'll reach him this time or die."

Late on the fourth day Hughes went down again, carrying food, claret, tobacco, a torch and the letters of Italian friends, all in sealed tins. The crowds in the sundown saw only the skips emptying water, hurrying up and down, clearing a way for the man in eternal night . . . heard only the pump, like the beating of a heart. Stumbling through mud to the knees, guarding his air-pipe through falling waters, Diver Hughes was scrambling up the rise.

Hunched on the shore of his black sea, Varischetti waited. His food was gone, he had made it last three days. The friendly tick of his watch had stopped. His few candles were wax on the rocks. He had lost count of the hours.

Deep in the water he saw a yellow haze. The light grew bright as a star. What it was he could not know, but it could only be salvation, a miracle of God.

A torch . . . a round bronze helmet . . . the hand of a man he did not know in a warm handshake . . . bread, beef, wine for cheer and strength, tobacco for ease—he was back in the world.

Hughes made daily journeys as the floods came rapidly down. Soon they would be low enough to bring the man out, a critical job. A day too early and he might be drowned, a day too late and he might be too weak for the ordeal. On the ninth day the diver went down four times, and dared not try, but towards evening, without a suit so that he might speak, he found he could wade the pass, water up to the chin.

For the first time the prisoner saw his rescuer's face. Little was said—to save his strength he was warned not to talk.

"What about it, Charley? Shall we try it?"

With complete trust, Varischetti nodded yes.

In the pass he failed and slipped, but Hughes held him up and carried him on. Hearne lifted him into the drives, and all together they battled up slowly. His arms about their shoulders, his eyes covered to shield them from the last light of day, he reached the top at last, to the great crowd's quiet cheers. Then he lost consciousness from sheer relief, and was carried away to the mine manager's home.

To congratulations from all over Australia, and loud ringing cheers, Diver Hughes was called upon to respond. He made a typical speech: "I made up my mind he had to be got out today, and if you're satisfied, we are."

It was Easter eve. The crowd sang hymns in thanksgiving for a humble miner's resurrection from the dead.

Nobody knows much more of Varischetti. With Inspector Crabb and Diver Hughes he had lived his drama and faded away with all the pilgrims of West Australian gold, just one of many epic stories that the old miners are never tired of telling in their tents by the pipe-line out around Coolgardie, seeing faces of men and women of another generation in the mosaic of the dark.

Rainbow's end, Coolgardie gold, led to the deep reefs of Kalgoorlie's Golden Mile, for half a century the richest mile of auriferous earth on earth. Thirty years from Ballarat, they went all round the continent to find it. Wheelbarrows made the first roads in the circle of Australia, from Bendigo to Rutherglen, Lambing Flat, Gympie, Coonoona, Mount Morgan, Charters Towers, the fatal Palmer River in the jungles of Cape York, then a thousand miles to Pine Creek, a thousand miles to Hall's Creek, three thousand miles south through the spinifex of the Great Sandy Desert of Pilbara, Murchison, Ashburton, Yilgarn, pilgrims of the pick and shovel unearthing wealth in millions, leaving a trail of towns and cities behind them, dying of thirst and hunger on the way to Coolgardie gold.

Through filmy blue hills of mulga we came to the old town, citadel of a fabulous past, looking back to "The Roaring Nineties", its brief hey-day of seven years before populations rushed away to Coolgardie. The noble red buildings of Bayley Street, its historic ruins and gaps, are dimmed into oblivion. The stately post-office with its colonnades, and now a staff of five, echoes the clatter of eighty men, the horn of the stagecoaches and gallop of the gold patrols from a thousand square miles. The Stock Exchange is silent, and Warden's Court where famous Warden Finnerty literally sat on bags of gold, a king of shreds and patches. In the Town Council Chambers, with lawns of emerald-green from "Saint O'Connor's" blessing of water—gift to the West of a truly great mind, and still a work of genius in Australian irrigation—are glass cases of mineral wonders, the thrills of long ago, "Coolgardie

nuggets" that "floated the slug" and the wild-cats all over the world for a generation—there was nearly as big a trade in specimens as there was in smelted gold. Here, too, is the library of the dead, books in rare first editions frayed and old, now never taken from the shelves. A faded notice over those shelves of long-forgotten books announces that "this library will close" in 1917. The suburbs of yesteryear, Montana, West End, Toorak, are barren, glittering hills of bottle-tops and stones, streets of houses long ago carried away to Boulder and Kalgoorlie. At Bonnievale, where once were five big mines, little Mrs Hewitt lives alone among the poppet-heads of history—she has played her own part through all that glamorous past.

Nobody lives in Angel Terrace now, but angels enough are in the graveyard, seven nuns at the gate. Beyond is Ernest Giles, the explorer, "Brave and enduring", lying at rest with Devon men, remittance men, stock-brokers and stockmen, Afghans, Germans, Jews, Italians, jockeys and priests, all creeds, all classes, jetsam of gold. Mohammedan High Priest Hajji Mullah Mehrbarn was born in Arabia in the year that Matthew Flinders circumnavigated Australia—he died in 1897 at the age of 96. Nearby lies Tagh Mahomet, one of his faithful, "who died by the hand of an assassin", shot in the back as he prayed to Allah in a vanished mosque of Bayley Street. Hero of a grim real-life serial of love, and greed, and murder, we are told that "His end was peace", but his vendetta raged on through two generations, the last chapter being written in the death of an Australian woman twenty-five years later at Karachi.

Eastward are the graves of a thousand men under the age of thirty, who died of fever when typhoid swept the tents on these tragic fields.

The whole world knows the story of Bayley and Ford, who lost their horses and found golden fortune . . . of the mad rush from all over the world to a waterless country, and all its toil and grief for wealth, or death . . . of the torture of living where many a pick was embedded in solid gold . . . of the rushes away from the place when the waterholes were dry, the mad trails criss-crossing the lurid desert sands, the quick and the dead, the great finds where the old mines still stand . . . the tents that became a city within a year.

A few of the older prospectors, with their dry-blowers still buzzing on Fly Flat, con over these vivid memories less than a lifetime away.

Victor Clarke, Varischetti's tool-boy on the old Westralia mine, painted for me in living colours the Coolgardie of his boyhood, a desert metropolis of 9000 people that with Paddy Hannan's Reward—Kalgoorlie—in less than ten years had yielded £5,584,000 in pure gold—689,000 ounces.

"My dad," he said proudly, "put down the first well on the gold-fields to save the lives of those who perished within a mile of the town. With two knobs of blue and some treacle, he painted a sign on calico, just WATER and a hand.

"We paid half a crown a gallon for water, two gallons the limit, and it was hot, out of the condensers. If you didn't get in the queue in time, you had to wait till next day. The women demanded every drop in the can. The whole family would wash in the same dishful—you weren't allowed to throw out the drowned flies—then it was saved for a patch to grow pumpkins. Potato water was left to settle for the washing-up. Once a magazine of the condenser blew up, and every window blew out of the town—a girl got St Vitus's dance from the shock.

"The hills were white with tents, but most of the people spent most of their time taking them down and putting them up—there were rushes all over the country in processions, al

the time, midnight conspiracies, and the whole town off at daybreak, their shakers and stores on camels and donkeys, maybe a hundred miles to get in the pegs.

"The town and the hills were a pretty sight after twelve at night, bicycle lights wavering for miles in a long snake-track in from the mines at Bonnievale. We had three morning dailies, an evening one, *The Golden Age*, three weeklies and a magazine—seven papers at one time. We had six troopers and a sergeant, three bands and a fire brigade that never had any water. The town burnt down five times. From a 6000-gallon tank in Bayley Street, after we got the bore, the people pumped and the firemen squirted, but the fire always won. Once the brigade went nine miles to a fire, and raced round with empty buckets, and couldn't put it out.

"A short life and a merry one, Coolgardie. We woke to a tin dish tattoo and all the mine whistles, and went to sleep to the sound of camel bells. Bayley Street had twenty-two pubs, all of them crowded, nice barmaids with their hair in golden rolls. Fashions were big square beards, Dundreary whiskers and waxed moustaches, top hats and bow ties and spats, slouch hats, blue shirts and moleskins . . . dress suits at the dances, polkas and mazurkas to piano and clarinet, and the johnnies carrying the belles home from the fancy-dress balls through the mud.

"We had minstrel shows and lantern slides, shadow pantomimes, and fireworks for a couple of thousand people—one night "The Devil Among the Tailors" lobbed in the box with the fireworks and set fire to all the camps. Saturday nights were rowdy with handball alleys, two-up schools and cock-fighting, hucksters selling shares in the streets and drunken men giving away nuggets. Hansom cabs in files waited for the toffs at the station, camels stood in strings at the end of the town where drums were rolling for the wrestling match of Gunga Brahim and Gutam Singh, white people invited and a supper of black coffee and Turkish delight. Sunday mornings we were always away in drags and drays and camel-buggies for the picnics at Red Lake and Grassy Flat.

"When the bore was down, we had a swimming-pool, but they filled it only once in six months, and none of us kids was allowed to swim there. Even so, we produced a champion swimmer of the West. Now the Olympic Pool at Kalgoorlie is the pride of the goldfields."

Great days and great doings, Coolgardie remembers when Cosgrove played the fiddle under the salmon gums in aid of the first little hospital in those western wastes, started by Sister Margaret O'Brien. Lord Percy Douglas took round the hat . . . when Father Duff and Father Treacy, the boxer, gathered £100 from kitty at the two-up school on Christmas Day to build the first church. It remembers when David Carnegie rode north across desert to Hall's Creek through 1500 miles of Spinifex and Sand . . . when its Wealth of Nations mine was sold for a quarter of a million, and the Londonderry offered for £700,000.

In those times a complete little community in the desert, with its theatres, art societies, exhibitions, music and intellectual life, it had even its own poets, "Dry-blower" Murphy, "Blue-bush" and Smiler Hales, long remembered, writing odes in their little hand-set papers to

The goddess of gold, she whose psalter
And shrine are in camps,
A battery surface her altar,
A furnace her lamps.
The homage her votaries render
In litany of rhythmical splendour
And the chanting of acolytes tender,
The song of the stamps.

But the greatest day of all in Western Australian history was 25 January 1903, when Lord Forrest, at Coolgardie, turned on a silver tap. The fields had produced £35,000,000 in gold with none but surface water. Behind that tap six and a half million gallons at four miles every day were creeping from the coast, three hundred and seventy-five miles to Kalgoorlie for the sake of perpetual gold.

It was a blazing day, heat of 112 degrees, with withering winds from the north and clouds of dust—one of those days that had too often brought death. The whole town awakened to the ringing of the fire-bell, no longer a horror but a joyous peal, and the whistle of the trains from Perth. Under an awning the Parliamentarians—Sir George Reid, Prime Minister of Australia, presiding—sat in state above the crowd of eager thousands.

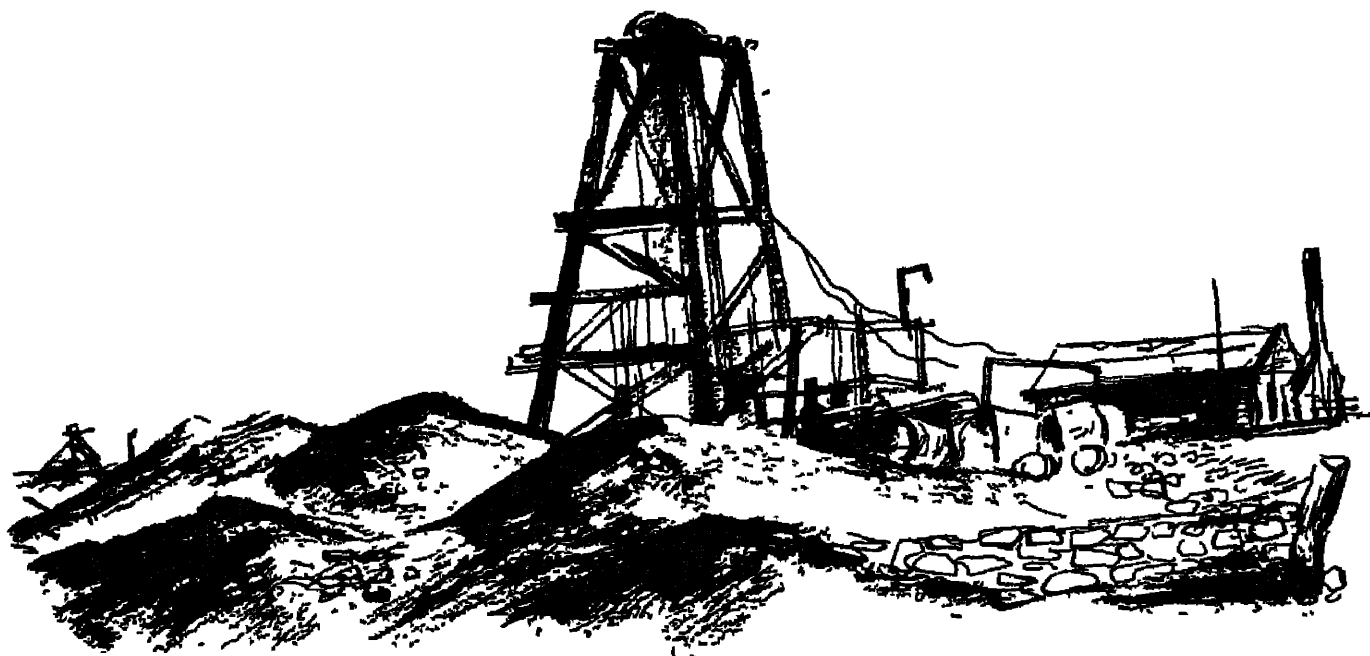
“Sir John then turned on the tap,” as one of the poets in prose has written. “A jet of glorious sparkling water ascended to a height of about twenty feet from the iron pipe, and descended in a sparkling cascade blown into spray by the wind in a tumult of cheers.”

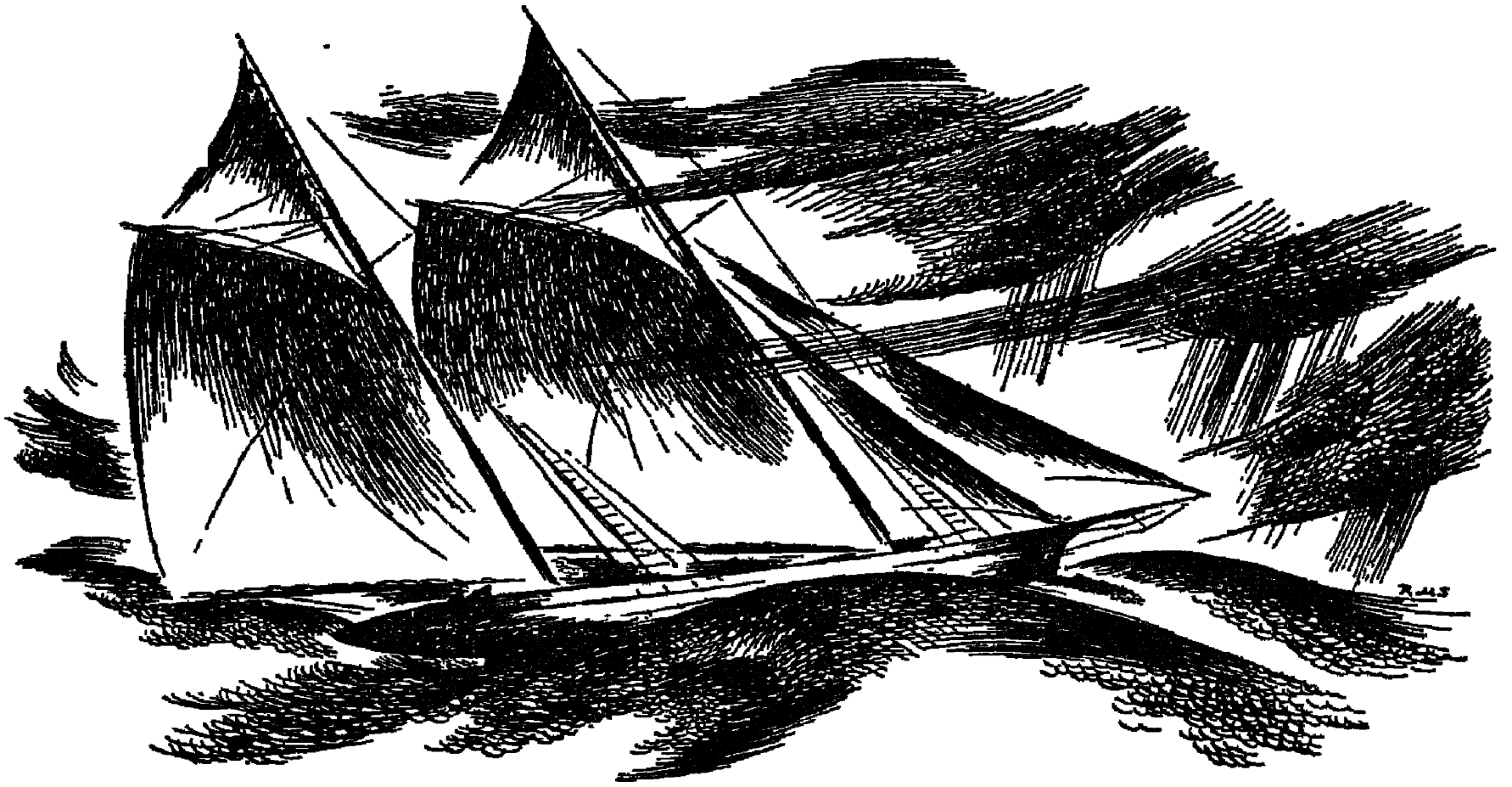
Eighth wonder of the world, the elixir of life, it was passed round in glasses as a toast, as though it had been champagne.

C. Y. O'Connor, the man who had given his life to the miracle, was not there to hear those undying cheers.

Today a hundred towns and mines of the West are linked by the pipe-line in a living chain of gold. Water is the life of the mines, where new investments and expansion now promise a second half-century greater than the first.

At Coolgardie they will proudly show you the old Phoenix mine that has never failed, with the very costean where Bayley and Ford found their first thousand ounces—and gold is still found in Coolgardie streets. The forgotten town wakens to a new future rising, like its Phoenix, from the camp-fire ashes of Old Glory in the mosaic of the dark.





CALL ON THE SEA TO BE STILL

by Roland E. Robinson

*Call on the sea to be still this night of the moon,
the sea in its molten brimming beyond the scrub,
this night when the ridges are dim and the gullies lie
silent and dark to the scattered stars; or call
on the swans going past between sunset and darkness,
making me wonder whose was the cry that seemed
lost in the gully, as call on this my unrest,
on this my unrest at one with the sea, with the swans
passing in querulous cries against the stars.*

THE MUSIC SCENE

by Sir Bernard Heinze

SOMETHING of the persistence and enthusiasm that we associate with the diggers who saw the early days of the Victorian gold rush seems to have seized the Australian musical public in recent years. Yet here the resemblance ends, for every year shows more clearly than the last that this is no passing phenomenon in Australia's cultural history.

Twenty-five years ago there were sixty subscribers for the first orchestral concerts given by the Melbourne University Symphony Orchestra. Today the same subscription series, now organized and presented by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, has nearly eight thousand subscribers, and each concert is presented three times. Adelaide, the third largest city in Australia, had the honour of being the first to treble the presentation of each subscription concert. But all the States display the same enthusiasm for great music. Concert halls cannot seat the numbers of people who wish to attend concerts, and when the booking arrangements for the subscription series are announced a queue of hardy music-lovers waits outside the booking office all night in the hope—often disappointed—of being able to obtain last-minute cancellations.]

The Australian public now supports five permanent symphony orchestras—in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane and Hobart. In Melbourne there is in addition a recently subsidized "Australian Symphony Orchestra", which gives concerts during the summer months to audiences of up to 75,000 people in the Botanic Gardens. In 1947 Sydney made Australian history by establishing the first permanent symphony orchestra. The appointment of Mr Eugene Goossens to the post of conductor of the orchestra and director of the State Conservatorium of New South Wales gives lustre not only to the music of that State but to music in general in Australia.

There is no uniformity in the organization of these permanent orchestras. The Sydney Symphony Orchestra, for example, is supported by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the New South Wales Government and the Sydney Municipal Council; the Victorian Symphony Orchestra by the Australian Broadcasting Commission and the Victorian Government. In Adelaide a large part of the sum required for the maintenance of the orchestra has been contributed from private sources. But in every State there is one constant

factor in the maintenance and organization of our orchestras—the Australian Broadcasting Commission. Through the Commission's foresight and planning it has been possible to meet the demands of a continually expanding musical public.

I say "meet" and not "satisfy". For the appetite of the Australian music-lover seems to be insatiable. At the present time he shows a preference for orchestral concerts rather than for recitals, but he cannot complain of lack of variety in his diet. Throughout the winter months he is provided with the subscription orchestral concerts. The Australian Broadcasting Commission adds to the interest of these concerts by engaging guest conductors and world-famous soloists to supplement the work of resident musicians. A recent important development is the extension of these concerts to country centres, where their success has been most encouraging.

Until the advent of broadcasting, impresarios were almost entirely responsible for the organization of public concerts by visiting artists. Australia owes a debt of gratitude to firms such as J. and N. Tait for the discrimination they showed in the choice of artists. Until recent times, too, Australia owed the whole of its operatic experience to the energy and initiative of its foremost theatrical proprietors. But the years 1947 and 1948 saw the first positive result of a valuable experiment in the training of local operatic performers. The National Theatre Movement of Victoria presented a season of opera. For some fifteen years this movement, which was founded by Gertrude Johnston with little more than faith as a credit balance, has struggled to train young actors and singers. The season of opera gave young singers the stage experience that so many of them want and that Australia for so long has been unable to give them. Years of work under difficult conditions have now been recognized by the Victorian Government's grant to the National Theatre for a school of opera.

Like opera, chamber music has in the main been neglected in Australia, at any rate so far as permanent concerts or permanent groups of musicians are concerned. Sporadic appearances of quartets, trios and other groups have only accentuated the absence of, and the need for, a permanent group of musicians who will devote themselves to this most important aspect of music. Here again we have been fortunate in the last two years. The concerts given regularly by the Musica Viva Society have greatly enriched our musical experience.

Choral societies flourish in Australia, and in a country pre-eminent for its singers this is hardly surprising. Apart from competitive and church choirs the cities have splendid permanent choral societies, which annually present works representative of a wide variety of choral styles. After his recent performance of Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* with the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Society, Mr Goossens pronounced it a virtuoso choir. The recent granting of the title "Royal Philharmonic" to this society is a not undeserved honour, for it enjoys the distinction of being the oldest continuous choral society in the British Empire.

Orchestral concerts, recitals, opera, choral concerts—the Australian music-lover's diet is balanced as well as liberal. He can fill in the gaps between concerts by listening, for several hours a day, to programmes of recorded music and to concert broadcasts. Yet in spite of all these opportunities for musical indulgence, there are still those who write to radio papers complaining that not enough music is broadcast.

Australians have often been accused—and by their own countrymen—of lacking the real sporting spirit. It has been said that they would much rather stand and watch "the other bloke" than play themselves. A glance at the musical scene in Australia today is sufficient

to refute that claim. For the musical world I have been describing is not just a world of listeners. It is also a world of performers. We may perhaps have to thank our geographical position for this. Whatever the explanation, the fact remains that music in Australia is performed almost entirely by Australian musicians. During the recent war we were thrown on our own resources, and it was during that time that the phenomenal rise in the demand for great music began.

Then we would be unduly modest if we did not remember our musicians who have made a reputation not only for themselves but for their country overseas. A list of Australian performers who have distinguished themselves in various branches of the art would be an impressive one. But there are other signs of the enthusiasm for music-making in this country. Groups of musicians are organizing societies each with a special appeal to music-lovers. There is, for example, the Collegium Musicum in Sydney and the Melbourne Sinfonietta—a group inspired in its formation by the visit of the Boyd Neel String Orchestra.

The University of Melbourne has a flourishing musical life of its own and one that is by no means confined to Conservatorium students. Since the appointment of the first Ormond Professor—Professor Marshall Hall—the Ormond Chair has exercised a wide influence on musical education and on the cultivation of musical taste. In this respect the Adelaide and Melbourne University Conservatoriums and the State Conservatorium of New South Wales closely resemble each other. All these institutions have junior and senior orchestras and chamber music ensembles where young orchestral players receive initial training and student soloists are given opportunities of appearing before their fellow-students as well as before the public. Choral societies are encouraged, and in the Melbourne University the society, which is open to all members of the University, has for the last eight years presented Bach Cantatas and madrigals to the students; and has reached a sufficiently high standard of performance to appear in broadcast and public recitals. Everywhere, in universities, schools and municipalities there is evidence of active participation in different forms of music-making.

The most recent development in music in our universities is the establishment of a Chair of Music in the University of Sydney. That the universities of Australia and the State Government of New South Wales should have interested themselves in the cultivation of musical taste is in itself an indication that we are within the current of cultural education that has swept through the English-speaking world in recent times. Never in the history of music has it been so easy for us to provide people with the best that music has to offer. There is no longer an excuse for limiting musical experience, for it is available—in spite of our great distances—to city and country listeners alike.

That other important side of musical activity, the training of listeners, has made remarkable progress in recent years. In 1924 the University of Melbourne made it possible for me to introduce to Australia “Young People’s Concerts” and these concerts have been given annually ever since. But in 1933 the Australian Broadcasting Commission, realizing that the “profits” from such an investment would be incalculable, gave me *carte blanche* to introduce them throughout Australia. Today, thanks to the sympathetic encouragement of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, some two hundred thousand children annually attend an orchestral concert free of charge. The children combine listening with performance. They learn to know the orchestra, they sing with it, and they are able to hear their own contemporaries and near contemporaries as soloists.

Then in 1947 further progress was made. I believed that there was a great “leakage”

in potential music-lovers between the concerts for school children and the subscription concerts. At my request the Australian Broadcasting Commission inaugurated a series of Youth Concerts limited to young people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. In contrast to the Young People's Concerts these are subscription concerts. The charge throughout the hall is two shillings. These young people have lost none of the enthusiasm that distinguishes their younger brothers and sisters: they form their own committee each year, and the programme for each concert is decided by the votes of the subscribers. So that now any young person can be introduced to orchestral music when he is eight and can keep up his acquaintance with it and increase his knowledge of it as long as he has the desire or the will to do so.

Together with a record of these youthful activities acknowledgment must be made to the changed attitude of educational authorities to music as a medium for training the young mind. The Government of Queensland has for the past five years maintained and sent throughout the schools of Queensland a string quartet. The leader, Ernest Llewellyn, is not only a fine musician but a gifted teacher, and his stories of the devotion that young children show to fine music would soften the hearts of the most hardened unbelievers.

No survey of the contemporary musical scene should omit the great influence for good that the Arts Council of Australia is exercising. The decentralization of music in a country where closely settled areas are widely separated from each other is not only desirable but essential. I have shown how the efforts of different groups are helping the cause of music in this and many other ways. And it would be difficult to over-estimate the stimulus that the activities of the British Council have given to these enthusiasts. The example of musical perfection brought before us during the visit of the Boyd Neel String Orchestra has already influenced our musical development, and will continue to do so.

One would imagine that with so many performers and listeners demanding more music to play and hear, Australia would be a paradise for the composer. Yet this is not so. Creative musical activity does not yet correspond to the activity of performers and listeners. Many Australian composers have had their works performed both here and overseas, but in Australia they are handicapped because few of their works are published. Thus the overseas public has little opportunity of hearing contemporary Australian works.

Yet even these technical difficulties do not wholly explain the fact that there is as yet no contemporary music here that is distinctively Australian. It seems that for a while at least we must express ourselves after the pattern and style of European music. We have no musical background of our own and no musical tradition upon which to build. The songs and the music of the aboriginal can hardly be translated into the limited confines of the European major and minor tonal system. In any case it is impossible for historical reasons that aboriginal music should have an influence on Australian composition in any way comparable to the influence of negro music in America.

However, all those people who are writing music today are helping to establish the tradition upon which the creation of great music depends. Creative musical activity is after all a process of discovery, in which the early voyagers play sometimes a distinguished, always a vital, and too often an unrewarded or unrecognized part. But I have no doubt that ultimately we shall discover our own musical speech, which, while it preserves what is common to all the finest music, will at the same time have its own individual accent.

The musical scene in Australia today may well give rise to optimism—an optimism that is rooted in the future and not in the past.



Free open-air concerts in Melbourne's Botanic Gardens on Sunday afternoons have drawn as many as one hundred thousand people

MUSIC—Eileen Joyce, Australian concert pianist well-known in Europe, recently made a tour of her homeland under the auspices of the Australian Broadcasting Commission. She is seen rehearsing with Melbourne conductor, Sir Bernard Heinze, who has just completed twenty-five years of concert life. He organized the A.B.C.'s school concert series, which is attended by one hundred thousand children a year.



"THEY'RE RACING" is a magic word for Australians, notorious lovers of horse-flesh, whether it be found in the cattle country, on the stock route or the race track. Throughout the year men everywhere debate in their homes, on street corners, in clubs, bars and on the trams, the quality and form of horses. Some have called it a national vice. But the nation was largely built on the back of a horse. The horse is a noble animal, and the thousands who crowd the paddocks and enclosures of the big city tracks each week have a keen eye for the points of an animal. They know its pedigree, its performances, the reputations of its trainer and jockey.

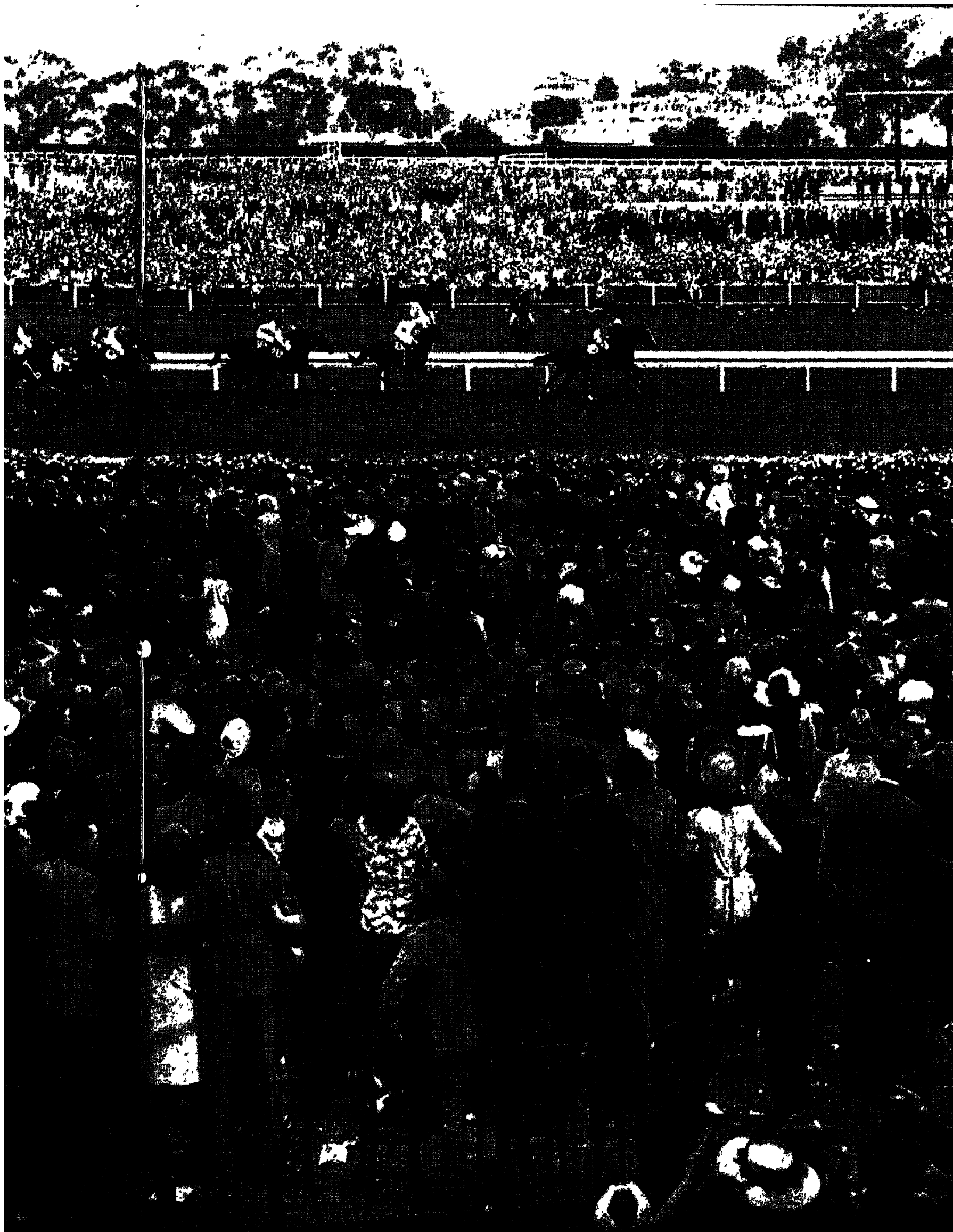
Foremost and most historic of events in the Australian racing calendar is the Melbourne Cup, held at Flemington racecourse in the spring. No other single event in the nation's life causes so much interest. Trains, planes, motor coaches are booked out weeks ahead; hotels and guest-houses are full; whole families travel hundreds of miles to back the winner of the year's classic race. The airway companies run special planes to Melbourne, to cope with the rush.

Nowhere else in the world does a whole nation stop work for a horse race. As the starting time draws near a strange hush falls in offices and factories from Hobart to Cairns. From Fremantle to Mallacoota Bar men and women tune in their radios, waiting for the excited first-hand account by commentators relayed from every station.

The roar of many thousands of voices greeting the champion as he gallops past the winning post can be heard from end to end of the continent. It reflects the same enthusiasm that fires owners and spectators at hundreds of smaller meetings during the season, for each country town has its race week.

Racing in Australia satisfies the gambling instinct of a people whose very way of life is often founded upon a gamble; against flood or drought, in the pioneering spirit. But horses here are by no means ciphers to put money upon. They are respected and loved for the spirit that extends them in action.





The finish of a Melbourne Cup race is relayed to an expectant nation immediately the horses flash pa
This is the climax to the southern capital's carni



FISHING FOR FUN

by Arthur Polkinghorne

ANY really worthwhile society must provide amiable outlets for the primitive passions of its more violent people, and havens of retreat for its more timorous and contemplative souls. The most enduring, inexpensive, all-embracing, insidious and satisfying institution for this worthy purpose is fishing, and in this Australia ranks high among the civilizations. There's a place for everyone in this fine institution, whether he's a captain of industry who wants to charter a luxury yacht for big-game fishing, or a soldier of fortune who likes to dangle a meditative line from a pier, and there isn't a taste that it can't satisfy or a grief that it can't assuage.

Perhaps you've worked up a hate against the debilitations of society, are sick of its attrition on your manhood and want to feel yourself virile, primitive and unfettered again? Then you move up to Queensland, up to the Barrier Reef. You're too mad to care about the fantastic coral gardens or the little fish, bright as an aviary of humming-birds, which dart in nervous shoals amongst the blues and greens and pinks of the reef. You want action; you want Spanish mackerel.

Early one morning when there's not enough light to call it light, but only a paling of the stars, you walk through the ragged paperbark-trees and the drooping casuarinas and clump along the wooden jetty to where your boat is waiting.

The boatman—you're not being a gentleman and hiring a smart launch with a peaked-capped skipper, rods, reels and swivel chairs—is stamping about the cockpit on horny bare feet big enough to flatten a mountain, boiling up a smoke-grimed billy-can of black tea on a roaring kerosene pressure-heater. He pours you out an enamel pannikin of thick, sweet, scalding fluid, you gulp it down, wipe your mouth with the back of your hand and then you're off. It's just light enough to see the gleaming silver of the basket of garfish you'll use for bait, and the coiled lines with their long wire traces and double-linked hooks. The engine plugs steadily on, and you get a smell of hot oil, hot metal, petrol and fish in your nostrils.

By now your lines are baited and trailing astern, loosely held in your hand, while you peer eagerly ahead and around. You don't notice that the sea's like shot-silk, that the mist is straggling up the mountains, that a flock of parrakeets has gone overhead like sparks from an anvil. You're looking for ruffles on the water, for a swift silver rain of little fish driven across the surface by the mackerel, for a mob of wheeling, screaming gulls to show you where the fish are working.

Then it happens. The line you've been loosely holding tears through your hands, scorching and searing them until you tighten your grip; your heart pumps up in your dry throat; your stomach trembles and feels faint. You let out a long-pent oath and hoarsely croak "They're on". The boatman grunts, throws over a marker buoy, eases the engine down and grabs his own singing line, braces against the gunwale and heaves until his sun-scaled arms look like knotted mahogany. And all the time the hooked mackerel drive around in a wide, resistant arc like brilliant scythes, swift as arrows, strong and stubborn as unbroken horses, and the lines hiss through the water.

You keep on heaving until your shoulders burn in their sockets and your city-soft hands are seared. Then you get a sight of the flashing silvery torpedo with the blue-barred sides and your strength floods back. You've got him near the boat, but you're not quick enough to whip the wire trace over your shoulder and twist your body forward to wrench him in, and off he drives again. Next time you make it, and forty pounds of streamlined perfection drums on the floor-boards, razor-toothed jaws snapping as you try to slip the hooks. And then you start all over again, and again and again until every muscle aches. By the time the sun's well up, you're glad to be going back; glad to toss down a couple of inches of neat rum from the chipped pannikin amid the smell of oil and petrol and fish.

But maybe you're of a quieter disposition. Then you can fish more sedately for the reef fish—cavernous-mouthed groper that grow to six hundred pounds, huge cod, brown with cream spots, emperor bream as wide as a table and as pink as the dawn, and a host of lesser fry as gay as the aurora borealis. And if you get sick of this infinite variety of colour, shape and size you can wander around the mangrove islands after the northern mud crabs, their bodies as big as a plate and claws the size of a man's fist, strong enough to crush a wooden batten like a wafer. Inside this massive armour-plating you find a flesh so tender and so succulent that by comparison lobster is as coarse and crude as crocodile hide.

Of course there are people who don't like crabs and who love the sea most when they observe it from the steady platform of the shore. For them there's the whole Australian coast, scooped out into long golden beaches, and broken by craggy headlands, and from either they can get a variety of light-tackle fishing that's as good as anything in the world: Jewfish, tailer, bream, salmon, kingfish, blackfish, drummer—all full of fight and flavour.

But all this is for the sea-lovers and those who can get to the sea. That doesn't mean that the landlocked have no spiritual safety-valves. Forgetting all about trout—though they're worth remembering because they grow big enough to frighten a British half-pound angler—take a look at a farmer or a country townsman anchored near one of the sluggish rivers that fade into a string of waterholes in the dry summer. Here's real tranquillity for the man who wants to escape, not the attrition of physical inertia, but the weariness of labour. They'll set out in the evening with a tin of witchetty grubs and a few saplings and make for the waterhole or river. They'll stick the saplings, with lines attached, in the ground, rest them in a forked stick, and, if they have any finesse, tie a little bell, or a tobacco-tin with a stone in it, on to the springer. Then they'll sprawl under the gum-trees, stare at the blazing stars if they feel contemplative, yarn or pour themselves a few drinks to limber up their recollections. Sooner or later one of the bells will ring or a stone will rattle in a tin. Someone will saunter down to the river and drag in a sluggish, fat twenty-pound Murray cod.

It's all very peaceful and quiet, and the wheat market, the wool sales and the overdraft seem farther away than the stars. So one way and another there's no reason why anyone in Australia should feel hemmed in.



NATURE'S PAGEANTRY

THE AUSTRALIAN CALENDAR

by F. Rhodes

“**M**AN’S first calendar was printed in the sky, and was translated in the mark of the seasons which follow obediently the journeyings of the sun.” So wrote Mr F. Rhodes on completing *Nature’s Pageantry*, a book now awaiting publication, which was written “to inspire interest in the vast heritage of wild life that came to us with Australia”. From it have been selected these passages, illustrating the “harmonic rhythm of the year”.

January

January is a month of majestic star squadrons moving ever westward across the sky in glittering pageantry. Although the sun is farther north in January than in December, this is Australia’s hottest month. The aurora australis (southern lights) increases its weird show as the new year opens, though the majority of its displays are seen only in South and Western Australia.

The white-browed wood-swallow—or “rusty”—is sporting his rich, chocolate-coloured trousers, slaty-grey morning coat and vest, and white mutton-chop whiskers. He is also

busy on domestic duties which started in October. The blue-winged grass-parrot is nesting in southern States, the nuptial apparel comprising a cap, coat and vest of green—the coat with rich purple sleeves—light yellow trousers with a purple bandeau. He is a glutton for colours. Hatching out now is the baby plain turkey or Australian bustard, which competent young person is born with his swag up, and so wants no coddling at baby crèches. Selecting a site under matted herbage or, perhaps, in burrows, the white-faced storm-petrel is on shore leave to watch its white eggs, which are spotted or dotted with pink. Just who performs his traditional functions of warning sailors while he is so employed is not known.

Prawn fishing is at its best in New South Wales, and millions of these delectable crustacea are making their way from Tuggerah Lakes, Lake Illawarra and Port Jackson to the open sea. For many years fishermen declared that they had never seen a prawn enter these inland waters; but it is known now that they so enter as mites of only an inch or so long, grow to maturity in there, and then embark, as they are doing now, simultaneously on the seas of matrimony and Tasman. Although the precise areas selected by it for this function have not been determined, it is known that the Australian salmon (*Arripis trutta*) is commencing to spawn now, the season running into March. He patrols the southern coast of Australia from about Cape Leeuwin to near Sydney, though large shoals have been met travelling outside the three-mile limit well north of these latitudes.

In Queensland, the pea-shaped bloom of the bluebush is tinting the sandy inland ridges a rich yellow, presumably in an effort to outshine the saffron of the star plant, which is also in bloom. Seldom growing north from Gympie, the grey birch, which goes under the name also of scrub ironbark, is finishing its flowering. It seems to have got among the ironbarks by reason of its rusty-brown bark. Red ash and cream wattle are coming into flower, as are the mighty bloodwoods and the silver-leaved ironbark, the last-named donning a frosting of fluffy blooms over its dark green coat, and diffusing incense in a manner which brings joy to numberless insects and honey-eating birds. The stilted pomegranate has relaxed, and is showing a fine display of creamy-white flowers with long pistils.

In coastal scrubs the wild jasmine is festooning its tree host with virginal white flowers scented like a poignant memory. The wild damson, gnarled and twisted by rude coast winds, is fruiting, the rich purple drupe being much favoured by aborigines. On the bunya pine and rusty gum the seed is ripening, as it is on the cypress pine and silver beech, on the Queensland box and the grey ebony, and also on the pink poplar. Seed is ripe and falling from the kurrajong, the mahogany, the turpentine and white gum.

In New South Wales, the pink trigger plant, the yellow everlasting flower, and dainty bluebells are all glorifying the Barrington Tops, making a visit and stay there a sheer delight. The mighty jarrah and his cousin the red gum in Western Australia, are both dressed in creamy white. Great trees both of them, they appear to regard as vanity the flaunting reds of the red-flowering gum, or "rose of the west", or else they regard their own simpler colourings in the light of sacrificial robes, having regard to the inevitability of the saw-mill.

February

The orbit of the earth crosses that of two bodies or streams of meteors, those strange sky nomads, which have for centuries excited the wonder of man. There is a brooding menace about the weather, as if it were not sure whether to deluge Northern Australia with a tropical disturbance from Timor way, or from the north-east coast of Australia or the

Coral Sea or whether to attack it with a rude blast from the cold stores of Antarctica. It is a month of full tides and clear, moonlit seas, with the ocean whispering its secrets into unaccustomed ears among the roots and shrubs much above average high-water mark.

Great flocks of whistling ducks are appearing on the inland rivers of Central Queensland, the Dawson being a favoured locality. The whistler is a night feeder, when it patrols many



inland plains and rids them of such unwanted herbage as stock have not devoured; but the real business now is home-making.

The little blue penguin (*Eudyptula minor*) is stumbling over his feet in various shore time-payment establishments as he finalizes his accounts and settles up his household business preparatory to leaving for another sea voyage. The pilchard is arriving off the coast of New South Wales out of the vastnesses of the Southern Ocean, and is quite satisfied to study the White Australia policy from outside the three-mile limit. Only under stress of weather does he ever make for harbours and inlets, when he fills the mind of man with wonder at his incredible numbers, with speculation whence he comes and, incidentally, whither goes such of the vast host as escapes being devoured by one kind of land or sea shark or another.

Blooming shyly in cool recesses of the Queensland bush are many lilies not unlike jonquils. They are of cream and light brown, and have a dainty scent which surprises the intruder who may not be expecting such an array of rustic beauty. Then in the gullies of rain-forests are to be found compact shrubs carrying heads of flowers—not unlike chrysanthemums—of soft purple. Along the Queensland coast north from Cairns the black mangrove (*Bruguiera rheedii*) is bedecked in small white flowers. Attracting the black cockatoo now with its deep purple fruit that is white inside is the Burdekin plum (*Pleiogynium solandri*).

Eleven-month-old buds on the messmate (*E. obliqua*) in Victoria are bursting into bloom, as the tree opens its store of nectar and pollen for use by the bees during winter.

The Gippsland box is in full bloom, having commenced a short floral season last month, which season will end in March. The woolly-butt (*E. longifolia*) is at the height of its flowering, which covers the same period as the Gippsland box. Its honey is amber-coloured. The candle-bark gum (*E. rubida*) is bursting into bloom, and so is receiving close attention by honey burglars. Its bark is quite smooth, and shows patches which appear from a distance in beautiful tones ranging from salmon-pink to purple and bright crimson. The sugar gum is showing its masses of fragrant bloom, and is a veritable banqueting hall for bees, birds and insects.

A fragrant harvest is in progress in New South Wales, where the lavender crop is being cut. If the full fragrance is to be preserved and if its oil is to be taken at the zenith of its quality, the crop must be cut when the plants are decked in their robes of patrician purple.

March

March winds are erratic and fitful with a strong disposition to violence, with the stormy petulance of a tired child rebelling against going to bed. Men in the tropics watch barometers for signs of depression as anxiously as financial experts watch economic barometers. Tides run mad, patient trees are stripped, and tender birds are battered to death, and man on shore wishes for nothing so devoutly as a dry cave. At sea he prays for sea room and a staunch ship.

Stubble and small quail are moving north, following the tide of seeding grasses and ground berries; while the purple-crowned pigeon has joined the migration in quest of berries. The straw-necked ibis is moving north accompanied by the jabiru, but their travels are purely intra-Australian and they have no occasion to face the ordeal of passing the Customs. The white-tailed cockatoo is also moving north, but he is following berries and seeds, and is not dodging winter as are the majority of other birds now on the wing. The sacred kingfisher (*Halcyon sanctus*) has completed his domestic obligations and is flitting north in the wake of the sun. The rainbow-bird or Australian bee-eater (*Merops ornatus*) is gladdening the hearts of southern apiarists by moving north to the Celebes, Moluccas, and adjacent islands.

The giant perch (*Lates calcarifer*) are now entering the Norman and other northern Australian rivers, and can be caught in set nets. The object appears to be connected with spawning. Scaling, as they do, up to sixty pounds, they are worth the trouble of catching, even though they masquerade under the name barramundi. In Tasmania the grayling is spawning about the meeting places of fresh and salt water. He has a relation in Europe—*Thymallus vulgaris*—and is a land fish in the sense that he never goes to sea. Toward the end of the month the great white shark glides in on the coast of New South Wales, with a keen eye to business.

Before the aboriginal underwent the process of being civilized, he watched in March for the arrival in the coastal forests of the blue mountain parrot. If these screeching shafts of flashing colour were more than usually plentiful the aboriginal looked forward to bounteous supplies of migrating sea mullet (*Mugil dobula*) arriving in the bays along the coast of Queensland during June. This instance of long-range forecasting supplies denotes a keen knowledge of the workings of nature.

The albacore (*T. germon*) is still to be seen off the extreme south of Tasmania. Among other things that have been cleared up is the use made of the name albacore for other fish, the southern bluefin at Albany, and the Spanish mackerel at Geraldton.

Displaying its oval berries of yellow in a setting of leaves of light green, the Queensland dog-wood (*Denhamia pittosporoides*) is making a handsome showing. The Western Queensland sandal-wood (*Eremophila mitchelli*), which is known in New South Wales as budda, is decked out in bell-shaped flowers of much fragrance. The Leichhardt-tree (*Sarcocephalus cordatus*) is displaying masses of rich yellow blossom now. It is an ornamental tree with a spreading crown of heart-shaped leaves, and commemorates the name of one of Australia's land explorers. Making a magic carpet of lavender in Western Queensland is a small plant with lance-shaped leaves of light greyish-green. Also, after rain, there are masses of what people in south-west Queensland call wild jonquils—wonderful golden things with daffodil-like flowers bearing some dark brown stripes on the petals. A wide expanse of them swaying on a gentle breeze is a sight that is good to remember.

The Gippsland gum, one of Victoria's most reliable honey trees, is producing the wherewithal to fill many honey jars. Another consistent performer is the apple box, which is producing a rich amber-coloured honey that makes a good winter standby. In Western Australia the whorled river banksia (*Banksia verticillata*) is relieving the shadings of green, brown and russet that are characteristic of her March showrooms. Its display is of the yellow bottle-brush style, leaving a long, narrow fruiting cone when the perianths fall. South Australian growers are busy drying the last of their sultana grapes, after first dipping them in either a hot caustic bath or a cold emulsion of olive oil. Dipping is a matter of seconds, while the subsequent drying runs into days. Then comes grading and packing in attractive cartons to carry the fragrance into thousands of homes.

April

In April Jack Frost is pushing up from the southern tableland of New South Wales into Queensland, and also has a frozen hold on the southern tableland of the former State and has put Victoria into furs to as far west as Cape Nelson. With the exception of the Northern Territory, where there is massing a vast concourse of aquatic and stick-nest building birds ready for next month's egg-laying competition, there does not appear to be in the whole of Australia a single adult bird that has not pushed its family out into the world.

By now the lyre-bird has selected the stage—usually a mound or a log—from which he will sing during this, his operatic season, and is running over his music with a view to correcting faults and becoming tone-perfect. The challenging carols of this accomplished mocker, "the careless rapture that is born anew with each day—indeed, before the day is fairly come—and which can never be wholly captured by descriptive phrase", must retain to the full the quality which both charms and baffles. The lyre-bird is said not to nest—and hence to sing—in Victoria until the sassafras blooms to bedeck his auditorium.

There is something implacable, something fateful or even majestic, in the mighty invasion by tides of sea mullet (*M. dobula*) that are pouring into Queensland waters now. Presumably in their attempt to shake off irksome attendants, they travel north where possible in the surf. They are attended by a veritable horde of sea lawyers who collect their fees *en route*. Sharks and porpoises chase them in from deep to shallow water. They are known in Tasmania and Victoria as sand mullet, in Sydney as hard-gut mullet and in Queensland as mangrove mullet, so that it is small wonder that so much obscurity surrounded their movements.

The red fruit of the climbing *Embelia australiana* is ripe now in Queensland. It is a hard, globular drupe of about one quarter of an inch in diameter, and thrives in the southern part of the State. The berrigan (*Eremophila longifolia*) is making a good show of pinkish-red, bell-shaped flowers among its narrow leaves. Both forest and river casuarinas are flowering, as also are the rose apple, the yellow stringy-bark, the mahogany and the swamp tea-tree. Bees and honey-eating birds hold high revel, for nature has spread her table with a lavish hand. Seed is forming on the hoop pine, on the flooded gum and golden box, and it is ripening on the silver wattle, on the gum-top box and on the ivory-wood. Hard-tongued birds are paying their respects to each tree in turn as the brush-tongued birds pass on.

Victoria has a good forest show, there being no fewer than seven eucalypts in bloom. The grey box is decked in a frosting of fluffy blossom, from which the bees are taking heavy toll of nectar and pollen.

May

The sacred kingfisher, who got his name from the ancient Greeks, is still edging north. He spent his summer among the apple blossoms in Tasmania, and people with whom he winters are apt to regard him as a winter bird. It is a pardonable assumption, but, to be strictly honest, the kingfisher should mention that he is careful to keep north of the frost line.

Three of our black cockatoos are nesting now. All of them have taken flats in a hollow limb or spout of a tree, and are watching over the usual white eggs of birds who nest in dark places. The glossy black cockatoo—also called Leach's black cockatoo—is so engaged in Central Western Queensland and Victoria, where the casuarina flourishes and provides the seed on which this cockatoo feeds. This bird started nesting in March. The yellow-tailed black cockatoo, which has much the same range as the glossy black brother but includes Tasmania, is nesting now in Queensland only. This cockatoo also follows the stands of casuarinas, banksias and hakeas, but varies the seeds of these with the fat white grubs which it gouges out of eucalypts with its powerful beak. The red-tailed black cockatoo is allied closely to he of the yellow tail, both as to nesting and food; but his range is much wider.

The pearl oyster is spawning now. Having regard to the demands made by fashion on the shell of her offspring, she spawns again in November. Although reticent as to his domestic affairs, we do know that the blue-striped red mullet (*Upeneichthys porosus*) has left the rocky habitat along the southern coast of Australia in which he spent the warmer months, and has betaken himself to sea. He is a showy gentleman of from four to ten inches long, and affects a pull-over having a brown or dull red back, each scale being adorned with a pale blue spot. The sides are lighter, merging into pale pink in front, and the stripes—whence he takes name—are on his cheeks, where they have the effect of making it appear as if he had been tattooed. Another mysterious customer is the big bluefin tuna—distinct from both the northern and southern bluefin—which has been taken on several occasions off Sydney during May and June. But they were said to have been mere straggling striplings from the mighty schools of noble fish estimated at from forty to eighty pounds each.

The poplar-leaved Indian tulip tree is flaunting its large reddish-yellow flowers on islands that fringe the north-east coast of Australia and the Gulf of Carpentaria. Along

inland Queensland rivers such as the Lynd and Palmer the deep red flowers of *Eucalyptus miniata* are providing an arresting sight, as well as bee-fodder for winter. The brigalow acacia (*A. harpophylla*) is in flower, the rich yellow masses of bloom making a brave show amid seasonal browns and subdued tonings.

Still in Queensland, the white poplar is in flower, while the seed from last season is falling. The scrub box is both flowering and shedding last season's seeds, while the silver wattle is decked out like a yellow sunset. The blue gum and ironbark are both flowering; seed is forming on the black bean-tree and the yellow marble-wood; it is ripening on the scrub box and mahogany and is falling on the crow's ash and silver beech. The willow wattle (*A. salicina*) is in bloom, its small, fluffy blossoms disseminating a fragrance that attracts every brush-tongued bird in the district. Its seeds are of rich red, and parrots notch their seed calendar to remind them of the ripening date. Along the coast south from Gympie seeds of the white cedar are ripening—just finishing, in fact—and the wompoo or green pigeon is starting to put on flesh in consequence. This fine bird is flashing his purple vest relieved with orange, his green morning coat and yellowish trousers, among the white cedars in commendable style to make himself more desirable to discriminating diners.

In Central Australia the rich vermilion of hardy Sturt's desert pea (*Clianthus*) is showing vivid splashes of colour amid the drab sameness of the desert. It is a gorgeous thing. In Western Australia the *Templetonia retusa* or "cockie's tongues" is displaying handsome red flowers that look like the ace of hearts on a stick handle. The emu bush is showing dense clusters of cream, crimson and white flowers, which colours represent in blazonry faith, fortitude and purity. It does not seem possible to cram any more virtues on one small tree. The wild hop is making its best front-window show, its reddish-brown flowers tinged with green being in harmony with the subdued autumn tints. If there be any truth in the belief held by south Queensland blacks, oysters should be at their best now that the wild hop is flowering.

June

Things are quiet meteorologically in Australia during June. Official winter has commenced, but not in earnest, since the wind rests for longer periods in June than in any other month. No "southerly busters" have ever been recorded during June in New South Wales; neither the Northern Territory nor Western Australia has ever reported a June cyclone. The Murray River is running strongly now, and fresh life is pulsing along its course. Drowsing steamers which potter about its lower reaches are bustling off towards the heart of the continent to bring down the wool from far-away stations. The river is navigable until December, unless rain-waters have been augmented by snow-water from the Southern Alps, when it may remain open to about Easter.

Both the emu and the wonga pigeon have started nesting, the latter affecting a wrap of slaty-grey, with brown side panels and an underskirt of white. Between them these two birds could not make a decent nest, yet they both manage to rear large families. The black swan (*Chenopsis atrata*) is nesting on a raft of reeds and water grasses. Until discovered by Vlamingh on the Swan River in 1696, a black swan was as remarkable a phenomenon as a winged cat.

Round about the twenty fathom line, amid swirling currents and restful tide rips off rocky Queensland headlands and reefs, the narrow-barred Spanish mackerel—or giant mackerel or kingfish (*Scomberomorus commersonii*)—is making himself snug for winter.

He is in recess against the important spawning migration that begins in October. The northern bluefin is finding his way north now into Queensland bays, where he is known—wrongly—as the bonito. It appears as if this tuna winters north of New South Wales.

In Queensland the wonga vine (*Pandorea pandorana*) is a mass of yellow flowers like small bells. It is a veritable delight to the eye, but an offence to the nose, and expressive



bushmen have named it “dead dingo”. The needle-wood oak (*Hakea lorea*), or cat-o’-nine-tails as it is sometimes called, is decked in creamy-white blossoms. It is a rugged customer with rough bark, and leaves like knitting needles. A lover of quiet, shady creeks, the noble red gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) is a fine display of creamy blooms. Its trunk is a study in azures, greys, greens and flashes of salmon, and whole colonies of brush-tongued birds are holding high revel among its spacious branches. The red ironbark is also flowering in a colour scheme of pink and white, so that, together with the trees which were flowering last month, these two are keeping up the winter supply of honey in Victoria.

Commencing now and continuing till November the orange-red flowers of the undershrub *Chorizema parviflora* are to be seen in the coastal scrubs of Southern Queensland. The first half of its name was given because, simultaneously with finding it the first of its genus, Labillardière and his party discovered water of which they stood very much in need, and “were ready to dance for joy”.

July

July is a poor month for displays of aurora australis, but there is a slight increase in the incidence of thunderstorms. The snow that is falling on the Australian Alps will be held in store until melted by the returning sun, when it will feed the majestic Murray at a time when the last of the rain which fell at Canberra, Toowoomba and Listowel Downs—the last two in Queensland—months ago is passing out of the mouth of the Murray at Goolwa.

Although he hardly deserves mention, because of procuring all his household requirements in Eastern Siberia, to the detriment of Australian secondary industries, it is

stated, for record purposes only, that the bar-tailed godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) is now finishing nesting there and will set out soon on his leisurely return to Australia. He is never far behind the sun, is never out of summer clothes, and requires two continents in which to run his allotted span.

The coachwhip-bird (*Psophodes olivaceus*) is busy in the nursery. He is teaching his remarkable note to his gaping brood. He cracks his whip as he drives imaginary teams through the coast scrubs from Victoria to slightly north of the tropic line. He wears, with a jauntiness peculiarly his own, a full-bosomed coat of dark olive-green picked out with white. He also wears with equal unconcern the crest of royalty and the tail of a bird shopwalker.

The estuarine crocodile is at its love-making, and is apt to get peevish at intrusions on its privacy. There are no alligators in Australia, though the larger of two crocodiles found in Northern Australia (*Crocodylus porosus*) is quite wrongly called an alligator. Structural differences between the alligator and crocodile are subtle and obscure, the safest rule being to allow the matter of identification to stand over until the saurian is dead.

The trochus has finished spawning, and has the rest of the year in which to recuperate after the effort which began last March. The golden perch (*Plectroplites ambiguus*) is spawning in the waters of the Murray and associated rivers, where the demersal spawn is attached to submerged logs and debris. Although reported to inhabit the Mary River (Queensland), the golden perch is a little-known fish whose better acquaintance would be to man's advantage.

Making rich splashes of purple and brick-red, *Bougainvillea spectabilis* is an arresting sight now in Queensland. It is at its best about the end of the month or the beginning of August—though seasonal fluctuations may cause corresponding variations of the intensity of inflorescence—and displays rich pools of intense colour and flaunts a robe that would not disgrace royalty. Bougainvillea—an immigrant—asks but little of man, for it thrives in even poor soil, and survives in all the glory of its winter raiment on the site of many an old homestead, long after every other trace of what was once the centre of happy home life has vanished.

In Western Australia the Swan River myrtle is dressed in pale magenta-pink and submits, by not dying quickly in captivity, to the indignity of being used for table decorations. The spider orchid, a good Australian and a strong supporter of Federation, is blooming in all States. Its garb is snow-white, edged with pink piping.

August

The southern march of the sun is being felt now, but rainfall is very scant, and much of Australia gets none at all during August. The southerly buster, which dry-cleans Sydney occasionally, makes a rare appearance, after being absent since May.

In Central Australia the colourful rose-breasted cockatoo (*Kakatoe roseicapilla*), known otherwise as the galah, the willie-willock and the willock, is balloting for nest room in the few trees which line watercourses and lagoons. Nobody accepts the ballot results, because there are at least a hundred galahs for each site, and progress of the ballot has to be explained to every galah which arrives and wants to take immediate possession.

The first run of rainbow trout spawners is beginning to appear at the Lake Werribee hatchery, a circumstance calculated to gladden the hearts of many pious anglers. The

southern bluefin (*Thunnus maccoyii*) is shoaling up now off Flinders Island (Bass Strait) to begin—or continue—his northern trek to the vicinity of Sydney. This is his second appearance.

Sometimes in the tropics in August and in N.S.W. waters in January, February and March the sea at night becomes a brilliant mass of heaving liquid fire, when the criss-crossing tracks of fish are like silver streaks and the sea breaking on the shore is like the



smashing of millions of tiny incandescent lamps. Most people dismiss the phenomenon with the terse remark, "Phosphorus", but even phosphorus does not merely happen. It originates in the tiny, single-celled marine animal *Noctiluca miliaris*.

The first of August has been Wattle Day in New South Wales ever since 1910. The movement to give expression to the "embodiment of Australian national sentiment in a native flower" was first inaugurated by the Australian Natives' Association at Adelaide on 20 September 1889. The Sally wattle or river myall (*Acacia glaucescens*) is budding in New South Wales. In parts of Queensland the black-leaved wattle is in bloom, dispensing a most grateful fragrance. Near it will also be found the buttercup bush, the lime bush and the white-flowering tea-tree.

In south-west Queensland the scarlet-flowering gum is now a thing of virile beauty. Like a huge crimson umbrella worked on a delicate tracery of rich green foliage draped like cascading emeralds, this splendid show is supported on a slender white bole of unsurpassed smoothness. It is rivalled in its display only by the Western Australian red-flowering gum. Bottle-brushes are showing out, *Callistemon citrinus* being well to the fore with its cream-coloured stamens that are the prelude to the unsympathetic-looking seed-cone. The yellow and white of the mountain daisy and the pink to purple of the blooms of the Darling pea are features of this month's dressing in Queensland. Despite the names of the two last-named, both are shrubs. A very handsome shrub now blooming is the *Hovea longifolia*. Its leaves are of olive-green above and of a lighter green on the under side, while its flowers are of deep royal-blue and are perfumed most delicately. Clambering over low-growing trees and

tall grasses, *Clematis microphylla* is now a mass of yellow bloom, as a set-off against the pale yellow, ball-shaped masses of mimosa blossom.

Investigation of the reason for alternate light and heavy crops in the Valencia late orange revealed that when the fruit is harvested now there results an increased crop in the following season, as compared with the case where the fruit is harvested in November, the normal season.

September

In September south-east trade winds prevail over the whole of Northern Australia from North-west Cape (Western Australia) to Rockhampton (Queensland). From Port Macquarie to Cape Howe the southerly buster is growing in frequency, arriving with a mad swirl and roar, with a drop in temperature of anything up to forty degrees. Southerly busters are recorded to have registered eighty miles per hour.

Countless numbers of birds are winging their way southwards, and accommodation on the avian express is packed to the last perch. From far northern Asian tundras, from the land of geishas and chrysanthemums, from the Malay States and the long chain of islands terminating with New Guinea, and from northern portions of Australia, a vast army of birds is now advancing upon us. A mighty host, impelled each year by a common, mysterious urge to get south, when waders make their strong purposeful flight in obedience to the same obscure laws as cause fluttering honeyeaters to follow the tide of opening blossom which now rolls from north to south.

Western Australia is *en fête* in its forest glades and bushland dells. Seven of her eleven species of kangaroo paws, those "curious tufted, sedge-like plants, native only of Western Australia", are in bloom, the colours ranging from red to yellow and green, and all the intermediate shadings. There are six everlasting flowers in bloom, mostly in yellow and pink; and three orchids—the lady's slipper, the hammer, and the greenbird—all in reddish-green or variations of those colours. The mustard flower (*Loudonia aurea*) is a mass of golden-yellow, and the Geraldton wax flower, one of the prettiest and best known of Western Australian flowers, is making a brave show of pinkish-white or waxy-white blossom. The rose-pink of the wild rose and the vivid orange that is shaded red of the orange creeper are in harmony with the rich hue of the pink boronia. There is a sandal-wood (*Eucarya spicata*) showing flowers that are outwardly green and inwardly red, the Qualup bell of yellowing-green flushed with crimson, and a bottle-brush (*Hakea multilineata*) with red blooms. The pink or white blossoms of the trigger plant tone in with the pale mauve of the morning flower (*Orthrosanthus muelleri*). Only one acacia or manna wattle (*Acacia microbotrya*) is blooming, its contribution being grape-like flower-clusters of bright yellow.

There is still wattle bloom in Queensland. The supple jacks are decked in tiny green and white flowers, and the leopard-wood tree is garbed in blooms of virginal white. The rose apple, which came into bloom in July, is now yielding its ripe fruit, which will remain in season until December.

October

In October an occasional severe storm makes its appearance along the southern coast. Hailstorms are on the increase, especially in Queensland and, to a less pronounced degree, in South Australia and Western Australia.

The pensive green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) has commenced to climb shelving beaches on hundreds of coral islands along the tropic coast. She is armed with digging tools to excavate the sand nest for her first setting of the eggs that look like golf balls. Laying will soon be at its height and will continue to the end of January, and as each turtle lays two batches of from 110 to 160 eggs, the world seems to be assured of turtle soup from some time to come. The fresh-water turtle is emulating her bulkier sea relative, and is laying from seven to twenty-one eggs in a sand hole near to the edge of the water.

The first generation of southern bluefin (*Thunnus maccoyii*) to reach Australian waters is sighting the coast of Australia in the vicinity of Sydney about 250 miles north of where Captain Cook first saw it. Nobody knows whence he comes, but from now on we do know that he moves south and west towards Bass Strait and so to the Leeuwin to enter into the economic life of Australia.

October is a jacaranda month. For weeks the trees have stood naked and forlorn, having thrown off their leaves to make a filigree carpet of brown. But great forces are at work as tiny buds on the bare branches begin to swell in response to the urge of flowing sap and the voice of spring. Then the miracle happens—in Queensland at least. Overnight—so it appears—the tree becomes clothed elegantly, “like a queen in the froth of lace”, in a dense mass of misty lavender, a thing of grace and wonder.

In South Australia the purple hibiscus, the red grevillea, and the red bottle-brushes are all blossoming profusely. The yellow gum is flowering in Victoria in clusters of three to five white, pale yellow, and more rarely, pale pink blooms. It flowers in earnest only in alternate years with a light crop in between. On the heathlands the manuka is showing its white, stalkless blooms, which throw the sage-green leaves into a kind of filigree background. The narrow-leaved peppermint is making a profuse show just now; but like most florid things it is of small economic value either to the carpenter or the apiarist. In Western Australia the mighty karri (*E. diversicolor*) is crowning itself with a mass of creamy-white flowers at a height of 250 or so feet above the ground. The quaint, carnivorous pitcher plant (*Cephalotus follicularis*) is baiting its bag-like fly-traps by showing a white flower at the end of the leafless scape. Inquiring insects that venture in to admire the bloom generally leave few traces of their fate.

November

In November, snowstorms make their final Australian appearance for this season, and duststorms, in New South Wales especially, are increasing in both violence and number. High festival reigns down on the islands in the Southern Ocean, the occasion being the wedding of the royal albatross (*Diomedea epomophora*). Measuring forty-four inches from beak-tip to tail-tip the albatross gives only four inches to the black swan, which is mostly neck, and is only four inches shorter than the Australian bustard, which is largely neck and legs. But the ten- to twelve-foot wing-spread of the albatross dwarfs to puny insignificance the efforts of all land-lubberly competitors.

On scores of tropical and sub-tropical islands the short-tailed petrel is tunnelling and burrowing in the soft sand, and is then furnishing the cavity with a few leaves. A few weeks earlier he and millions of others were in Alaska or Japan, and, at a given moment, they set out on their trans-ocean flight. Having been so far afield as Borneo and Java the swallow-plover (*Stiltia isabella*) is back with us and is nesting, but cannot be brought to speak of his

travels. The banded plover (*Zonifer tricolor*) is unpacking summer clothes in Western Australia; while the whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*) and one of the curlew gang are arriving back in New South Wales from Siberia, via China and Japan. The reed-warbler (*Acrocephalus australis*) is back from Lombok (Java), the bird frontier where Australian birds look across the narrow Bali Strait at Asian birds on Bali Island. But they never meet. By which avian law this frontier was established is not permitted to mere man to know, yet no human treaty is observed more rigorously.

The sluggish mountain-devil (*Moloch horridus*), a fearsome but quite harmless lizard, is laying its ten or so eggs on the Nullarbor Plain, where the transcontinental train bores alternately into the eye of the rising and of the setting sun. Its colour scheme through chestnut to yellowish-brown and, its main diet being ants, the conical spines with which it is covered, like a coat of prickly heat, suggest that its dinner of aggressive ants has striven at some time to burst through its skin, but got stuck and became a permanent feature of its attire. The mountain-devil is being emulated in its laying by the racehorse lizard, eight eggs being the limit in her case.

Spanish mackerel fishing is at its height now between Townsville and Cairns, but the big run is slowing down, and occasional slinky, spent fish are caught towards the end of the month. They have evidently spawned and are resting before making south again. The barracouta (*Thyrsites atun*) is beginning to spawn now in Tasmanian and Victorian waters, though the peak of the season will not be reached before February. It is a noteworthy fact that the vitamin A content of his liver is nearly double that of April last. When the main body of the first-season southern bluefin is making its way south now off Eden, those of the



second season or age-group have passed along the same route a month ago. They are also showing up in the vicinity of Backstairs Passage, on their way to Spencer Gulf and St Vincent Gulf.

On islands on the north-east and north coasts the coral-tree (*Erythrina variegata*) flaunts its dense racemes of bright scarlet blooms, which were in some way connected with the

funeral observances of at least a few coastal tribes of aborigines. Along the coast of Queensland from Brisbane to Cairns, and also along the banks of inland rivers such as the Condamine, the red bottle-brush (*Callistemon citrinus*) is bedecked in frocking of rich deep red, and it is making a very impressive show indeed. There are four other bottle-brushes in Queensland, and the genus is confined to Australia. The cockatoo apple is flowering, its contribution to the floral parade in Queensland being a large white bloom that requires only a sulphur crest and a raucous voice to look the name part.

The white cedar (*Melia azedarach*), which is not a cedar at all, is showing some fine sprays of lavender flowers; and on Tambourine Mountain there are orchids "with pale yellow candles blowing in the November winds".

December

Officially, summer began on the first day of December. What really happens is at the discretion of unruly weather gods, who are scornful of man's opinions or pronouncements. Although we have in Australia little of Christmas legend and tradition—other than those of older civilizations in the northern hemisphere—we have ample floral emblems with which to interweave folk stories and fancies in the slow development and growth of our national life. Our seasons being the opposite, as to months, of those in Great Britain has the effect that few, if any, northern hemisphere plants or animals retain their relation to the feasts or observances of the calendar with which they are associated by tradition and usage.

Queensland has probably as much distinctively Christmas bloom as any other State. Her bloodwoods are masses of sweet-smelling, feathery-white blossoms, while her flame-tree (*Brachychiton aceritulus*) is sufficiently distinctive to carry the Christmas tradition only for its somewhat circumscribed range. New South Wales has her Christmas bush (*Ceratopetalum gummiferum*) a tree which may grow up to forty feet or so. The white flowers are five-lobed with brick-red calyx, and set as they are among shining green leaves they form a most attractive show. Christmas bells (*Blandfordia nobilis*) grow only in New South Wales and are carried on an erect stem, appearing in a "cluster of flaming, pendulous, bell-shaped flowers shading from orange-brown to yellow". Another of the same family (*B. grandiflora*) grows "only in peaty pockets on the craggy escarpments of the Blue Mountains". Its flowers are larger and of a richer red than those of its cousin. The Victorian Christmas bush (*Prostanthera lasianthos*) bears a pea-shaped flower of pinkish-white spotted with purple. It dwells in secluded gullies, in discriminating association with graceful tree-ferns, and attains a height of about twenty-five feet.

Tasmania's Christmas flower is *Bursaria spinosa*, an evergreen shrub which is to be found in all States, but is at its best about Christmas only in Tasmania. It also has its exclusive Christmas bell (*Blandfordia marginata*), the most handsome of a handsome family, which grows nowhere but in the mountain fastnesses of Tasmania.

Western Australians have the *Nuytsia floribunda*, a magnificent dresser for just a few weeks at Christmas. It is a tree with sprawling branches growing up to forty feet, and its mass of dazzling orange-yellow bloom is something of which people in the western State are justly proud—more especially of their exclusive ownership of this magnificent tree. It is held to be unlucky to pick its flowers before Christmas, and the glory of its display fades with the dying year.

THE DARK PEOPLE

by Alan Marshall

TO the east of Darwin lie the vast swamp lands that skirt the western boundary of Arnhem Land. Here, in the wet season, the long grass is flattened by the rain and wind so that it lies upon the water like the drenched hair of an animal. Criss-crossing this enormous expanse of green are the uncovered waterways made by the buffalo pushing a pathway for themselves across the flood plains.

Here the magpie geese rise in their thousands, the wind of their wings disturbing the tranquillity of the open pools that dot the swamps.

Beyond these swamps rise the ramparts of Arnhem Land. Sandstone cliffs, carved by the wind and rain of centuries into fantastic pillars and tottering walls, stand with their base hidden in a screen of boulders and shattered stone.

These cliffs guard Australia's largest native reserve, the last untouched home of the black.

Arnhem Land, which stretches beyond these cliffs to the waters of the Gulf of Carpentaria, is not a hospitable region where the black man can live in comfort, where game is plentiful and vegetable food abundant. Rather is it a hard and forbidding land that breeds a strong and independent and courageous people.

These are the qualities that mark the blacks who roam its bush or build their mia-mias along its coast. It was these people who resisted the white man's advance long after those in other areas had been vanquished.

There are probably no more than four thousand blacks in Arnhem Land today. Most of them live on the missions that are established on its northern coastline. Odd family groups still live the nomadic life of their ancestors, but the lure of the white man's food and tobacco is strong and they make periodical visits to the missions to replenish their supply.

One such family group came striding in from the bush as I sat beneath a tamarind-tree at one of these centres. They marched in single file, led by a tall native carrying four stone-headed spears and a wommera. Transfixed on one of the spears was a goanna. The leader strode with an erect carriage and there was pride in the lift of his head.

Behind him walked two other men with a dead wallaby hanging from a pole resting on their shoulders. They were also armed with spears. One of them had a huge parrot fish strung on to his wommera.

Then came four women, two of whom had babies riding on their shoulders. The babies clung to their mothers' hair, their chubby hands buried deep in the black, wavy locks. Each woman carried a dilly-bag suspended from a string that passed around her forehead. The bags rested between their shoulders. They were laden with water-lily roots, yams and the nuts of the zamia palm.

Walking steadily in the rear were the children—nine of them. One little girl of about eight carried a baby sister on her shoulders. She kept her eyes on the ground as if the baby's weight made it necessary for her to place her feet with greater care.

All the children had thin legs, the thighs being almost as slender as the calves. Their bellies were tight and rounded and seemed out of proportion to the frailty of their limbs. They had happy, smiling faces and dark brown eyes shaded by long lashes. Their teeth were white and even and flashed between their full lips when they laughed.

The party gathered round the mia-mia of a tribal relative. The men laid their spears upon the ground and squatted beside them while they talked to the resident blacks who had watched their approach and who had selected this spot for a confab.

The mothers had seated themselves and were feeding the babies. I had walked over to the mia-mia to have a look at these babies. They were a dark coffee-brown in colour, though the palms of their hands and the soles of their feet were almost white. Their skin seemed to have a bloom on it as if they were still untouched by wind and rain.

One of them, a little girl, lay cradled in her mother's arms sucking contentedly. But a bauhinia blossom on the bush beneath which her mother sat claimed her attention. She stopped the quick movements of her lips and lay looking up at it with an absorbed expression upon her face, the nipple of her mother's breast idle between her parted lips.

Her mother gazed down on her, a gentle smile on her face. She touched the baby's cheek with a dark finger, then looked up at the flower. She raised her arm and plucked the blossom, which she waved before her baby's eyes in a playful gesture. The baby smiled, then began sucking again.

The blacks are devoted to their children and though they spoil them outrageously the children are thoughtful and kind.

It is interesting to compare those factors that condition the lives of the piccaninnies with those that condition the lives of white children. In the beginning there is no difference between the children of both races except in colour. Black babies and white babies show the same interest in their little hands, which they hold in front of their faces as they lie relaxed on a bed or on sand. They waggle their fingers and crow. They make purposeless movements with their legs and jerk their arms and look steadily at their mother's face while she gives them the breast.

When they begin walking they toddle uncertainly on vague journeys of exploration and examine leaves and twigs with a similar interest.

The change comes when they are old enough to play with other children. Now the non-competitive nature of the blacks' civilization gives a joyous quality to the games of the piccaninnies, a quality that is not manifest in the playgrounds of the white.

A babble of sound comes from the school playgrounds of white children. There are shouting, high cries and laughter, but there are also protests, demands, recriminations. In its total effect it is not a happy sound.

How different when one listens to a group of black children at play. They play with singing cries, with joyful notes, with laughter. They are like a flock of birds chattering in the grass.

The reason for the difference in the attitude of the black child and the white child towards their playmates is this: the piccaninnies play with things that are available to them all. Their toys are rush spears, stones, shells, sticks and coloured clays. Possessiveness in these things just doesn't exist. If one child has a rush spear, the other child can pick one too. If shells are suddenly found interesting, all the children run down to the beach and get shells.

No one envies what the other has since no one possesses what the other can't have also.

The toys of white children are not so easily obtained, and those who have them are the envy of those who haven't—thus the arguments on their playgrounds.

I sat one day and watched a black boy of ten called Bandarawoi organize a spear fight. Bandarawoi was thin even by blackfellow standards. His legs were like sticks, but when he ran they carried him with speed and grace.

I found it easy to make this boy laugh and since his laughter was contagious his companions always seemed to be in a state of merriment. They referred to him as a "funny fella".

"He funny fella," they would say, looking at him when he was convulsed with laughter, as if such a capacity for enjoyment were not quite normal.

And, indeed, his laughter at times did seem too powerful an expression of the joy he felt in watching me poke faces, act the clown or simulate fear. He always bent forward from the hips when laughing so that his head was brought on to the same level as his knees. But there were times when even this posture was incapable of supporting the immensity of his mirth and then he would stagger to a tree and embrace it or lie on the ground and roll till his laughter had ceased.

He liked games in which he could leap and yell, so mock fights with rush spears was a favourite of his. He divided the children, boys and girls, into two sides. The spears were rushes and they threw them at each other with great skill.

Bandarawoi led his yelling warriors in charges or crept with them through the long grass to escape an ambush or a foray. Happy cries punctuated the game. There was continual laughter. Only rarely do black children lose their tempers, but when they do it is an undisciplined outburst that quickly burns out.

One little boy, "speared" a number of times without being able to retaliate as skilfully, threw himself on the ground in a rage. He kicked himself round in circles as he lay on his back on the sand. Bandarawoi gave one glance at him, then led the children away to continue the game where his screams would not interrupt them.

In a little while the boy sat up, incapable of persevering in such a convincing display of temper when there was no one there to witness it. When he rejoined his companions he was smiling again and they, in their turn, made no reference to his outburst but played with him as before.

Bandarawoi's skill with a rush spear impressed me and I asked him would he teach me to throw one. He evidently thought a toy spear was too undignified a weapon for this purpose, so he raced away to his father's mia-mia and after a hurried consultation with that agreeable man he returned with a full-sized spear and wommera.

Three of his small companions joined him in giving me this lesson.

"Hold it allasame dis way now."

I held it. I did all he said. I fitted the hook at the end of the wommera into the notch at the end of the spear. I poised, then threw.

The spear buried its barbs in the earth a short distance away, quivered a moment, then

sank slowly to the earth. It was a humiliating cast, but the children acclaimed it as a tremendous throw.

"Good shot, Gurawilla," they cried. "Number one shot."

They called me "Gurawilla", which means "song maker" and is the nearest word they could get to "writer".

"Good shot. Number one shot."

Such was their praise that I changed my opinion about my throw and felt rather pleased with myself. I wondered how I compared with these boys in throwing a spear.

"Now you throw," I said. "Let me see how far you can throw it."

But they didn't greet my request with much enthusiasm.

"Nudder time," they said. "You too good. You number one."

But I insisted, so rather reluctantly they lined up and, one by one, cast the spear in a demonstration of their skill. Each one set his jaw, ran a few steps forward, then hurled the spear with every evidence of a set determination to beat me. But each throw fell short of mine.

I was surprised and pleased and as I made my way back to the mission house I concluded, with some enthusiasm, that maybe I was a natural spear-thrower with a gift that was being lost to the world of sport.

When I reached my room I looked out of the window and, down on the beach, I saw Bandarawoi and his companions competing against each other in throwing the spear. Each boy threw the spear at least four times as far as I had done. These children of the blackfellow had a rare thoughtfulness. They allowed a man of a different colour to themselves to win at a game at which they excelled, merely to please him.

The ambition of all the little black boys is to be a good hunter, but the lives led by the little girls is a preparation for motherhood and gatherers of food. They are devoted to their smaller sisters and brothers and, when called from play to look after the baby, as they so often are, they never go reluctantly but run to their mother almost with eagerness. They carry the babies on their shoulders as their mothers do, and sometimes one feels that the plump piccaninnies sitting so placidly with their creased legs round the necks of their sisters, would exhaust them with their weight.

I was once at a mission that was being visited by a doctor. The doctor entered an old dilapidated galvanized-iron hut to examine a child suspected of having tuberculosis, common amongst the blacks. The child must have been terrified at his entry. She cried loudly in her fear.

Children, fascinated by her cries, gathered round the hut in a frightened group and peered through cracks in the wall. They did not speak to each other, but when a cry stronger than the rest came from the child within the hut, they glanced at each other with frightened, questioning eyes and the little ones clutched the skirts of older sisters. On the outskirts of the group a little girl stood holding the hand of a baby brother who had not long taken his first steps. She suddenly released her brother's hand and moved closer to the hut. He watched her, feeling afraid at the responsibility of standing alone without a comforting hand to grasp. Sometimes the cry from within the hut was too terrifying to be borne and all the children moved in a sudden panic back from the hut, looking at it over their shoulders as if it had menaced them. When this happened the baby brother didn't move but looked nervously from face to face, then back at his sister, as if searching for enlightenment.

Then the doctor emerged. The children scattered, running desperately for the shelter of trees. With them went the little boy's sister who, in her panic, had forgotten her brother.

The baby brother, seeing her go, yelled in fear. The sister heard him and turned. She had a moment of indecision, then raced back towards him, her thin legs twinkling. She did not look at him as she ran, but kept her desperate eyes on the doctor. The little boy awaited her coming with uplifted arms, his yells even louder.

When she reached him she spread her legs wide apart and, with a struggle, lifted him so that his chest rested on her shoulder and his bottom rested on her clasped hands. She staggered away with him, trying to run but unable to do so because of his weight. When she reached the mango-trees she stopped, panting, and looked back, but she still held him tightly. He had stopped crying. His arms were around her neck and he looked back too.

From early childhood the girls are trained for their future task of food gatherers. It is the responsibility of the native women to keep their men folk supplied with vegetable food, referred to contemptuously by the men as "woman tucker". Each day the mothers, with babies astride their necks, go walking through the bush in search of yams, edible roots and fruits from the bush trees. With them go the little girls whose task it is to help their mothers fill the dilly-bags the mothers carry on their backs. Many bush yams are poisonous and the girls must learn to recognize these. Other roots must be pounded and washed or soaked for days before they are fit to eat. The mothers explain these things to their daughters as they walk through the bush.

Once when accompanying a group of women and children on their daily hunt for "woman tucker" I dug up a large yam I had discovered and handed it to a little girl to take to her mother. She looked at it, then tossed it aside.

"Him cheeky," she said, her way of saying that the yam was poisonous.

The children chew the stems of grass as they walk, the juice evidently supplying them with a needed food. When they come to a "wild grape" vine they crowd around it like birds plucking the grapes and popping them into their mouths with great eagerness.

The babies seem to eat anything. Sometimes when a mother comes to a spot where yams are plentiful she lifts her baby from her shoulders and places him on the ground. On such occasions, his expression suggests he has been placed in the midst of an abundant food supply. He reaches out eagerly, seizing twigs and pebbles and pieces of bark. Each find is thrust into his mouth for a quick chew before it is discarded. But sometimes a grub or a caterpillar or a beetle comes his way and these he swallows with excitement as if he is savouring a rare and delightful flavour that is generally denied him. Only recently my baby daughter ate a caterpillar she had found in the grass. Judging by her expression, I am sure she enjoyed it.

Babies are the same the world over, it seems. Given equal opportunities this similarity could continue into their adult years and then the black man and the white could really live as brothers.



OVER THE RANGE

by Ion Idriess

“**O**VER the Range.”

There is a lure in those words, a call to adventure. To folk at little Derby, outpost of the West Kimberleys, they bring faintly the harsh, wild cry of the black cockatoo flying over unnamed gorges; they bring the shrilling, far-flung hunting call of the Ngarinyin, the sough of an angry tide rushing up cliff-walled fjords, the vista of range upon range, of tangled valleys through trackless bush stretching far away. And they bring the ominous reminder: “They who ride over the Range die with their boots on.”

Strangely true—of the handful of men who have penetrated there and “gone west”, practically every one died with his boots on. But all are not destined to die “hard” out there. And the score or so of settlers now firmly established are as full of life as a butcher’s pup.

The Range is the King Leopolds, the maze-like barrier stretching from east to west that for so many years defied northern penetration by the best of bushmen. It was only when gaps such as Gardiner’s Gap were found that the parallel lines of ranges were gradually penetrated. Gardiner’s Gap proved to be the key that opened the ranges, a cliff-walled, narrow pass that looks as if it has been hewn through the range by a giant’s axe. The big Range separates the fertile plains of the old Fitzroy River in the West Kimberleys from the rugged land of the north. Out there, the handful of settlers have pioneered and are pioneering the country just as our grandfathers pioneered our now settled lands seventy and more years ago.

Let us pioneer with one of them as he rode “over the range” a few years ago.

Fred Merry had an urge to make a home of his own, so he resigned from the managership of the frontier cattle station of Mount Barnett, and rode north into the Range. Once over it he would seek out country on which to make the home of his dreams. His savings were less than £500, most of which he had invested in horses, saddlery, and supplies. There rode with him also two aboriginal stockboys. He had reared and trained them almost since babyhood. Not only as stockmen to help work the cattle station he hoped to carve from the wilderness did Fred Merry bring these blackboys to follow his fortunes, but as a safeguard as well. He was venturing into untamed country and he knew that his laden packhorse team, and particularly his few tools of precious iron, would be a tempting prize to the Munjongs, the wild aborigines.

He was to be glad indeed that he brought those blackboys along. And the proof of their regard for him was in their going, for as they penetrated farther into the big Range, as they rode along the wooded valleys nearing the fastnesses of the wild men, fear gleamed in their eyes and showed in their listening ears. They knew full well what their fate would be should disaster overtake the white boss.

Pushing on, pushing on, day following day, with the blackboys and dogs and the rifle, the campfire and horses by night. The rustling of some prowling animal, the eerie screech of an owl, the chill before dawn when a man stretches from his blankets to listen and shiver and to poke the ends of the firesticks together.

The dawn of the day on which Fred Merry found his very own lands brought a glory of golden light creeping over the bush, slowly warming the wild valley where the solitary white man was putting on the billy, and where the shadowy figures of the blackboys went creeping out after the horses. From over some misty crag came floating the harsh, lonely cry of the black cockatoo. As the wanderers commenced breakfast they paused abruptly, eyes questioning, ears listening.

"Kok-Kai-E! Kok-Kai-E!"

That long-drawn cry, from high up, came moaning away along the valley. Now faintly answered by: *"Kok-Kai-E! Kok-Kai-E!"*

It was the hunting call of the wild aboriginal.

"We're in the land of the Munjons now and no mistake, old boy," said Merry to the old dog. "What name that one?" He winked at the stockboys.

"Munjon!" answered Paddy shortly.

"Plenty feller?"

"Yu ai. Altogether plenty feller."

"What name him feller been do?"

"Him bin huntin' kangaroo!"

"Oh well," said Merry, with a grin, "why look so solemn about it? They hungry feller too—they want breakfast same as we do. Soon as we're saddled up we'll push on."

It was on that midday that Fred Merry found his home, nestling between low, scrubby hills, a lovely sward, green as a lucerne patch beside the quiet waterholes of the Sale River. Beautiful waterholes mirroring the snow-white trunks of paper-barks, reflecting pictures upon pools prettily fringed with creepers and shrubs and tall, slender grasses alive with birds.

Merry was a worker. He pitched camp, strolled over the little block of good land and decided that this was "home". Then he got to work with the axe and built his first hut. He was watched from the woods by suspicious eyes under shaggy brows. They belonged to hefty, naked tribesmen, cicatrized by the scars of warriorhood, with scarlet-painted bands across their foreheads, each carrying an armoury of stone-headed spears decorated by marvellous carvings, a stone-headed axe, and stone knives. Very few warriors as yet carried the dreaded shovel-bladed spear, for they were only just beginning to trade for iron with the distant station blacks.

As he toiled Merry chuckled grimly at his scared henchmen clinging so close beside him. He was one white man alone in the Munjon's land. And yet he was not alone, and he was very strong, for firstly he was strengthened by knowing how to handle aborigines. Secondly, his scared stockboys would stick to him through thick and thin. Thirdly, he had the dogs. Fourthly, he was determined to make friends, but with respect on either side, as quickly as possible. So, while working and camping and minding his own business, he took

each opportunity of establishing friendly relations with these wild Ngarinyin. And with the Wonambun men who often visited them. And with the Worara hunting bands from near the coast who occasionally visited him to have a "look-see".

Meanwhile, forty miles south at Walcott Inlet he found a neighbour and friend, Harold Reid, with his wife and two youngsters. Mr Reid was manager of Munja, a Government aboriginal station started by the Western Australian Government with the laudable object of training aboriginal tribes in the raising of cattle, so that they would be able to carve out their own independent destiny when white settlement inevitably came to this last of the wild lands. Reid had also developed a pet idea to further this aim—the growing of peanuts. And the natives were taking to the idea, for vegetable foods are their great standby; thus they could understand and appreciate the nutritive peanut.

"Go in for peanuts," advised Reid earnestly. "The nuts will keep the tucker-bags filled—and more. You're a cattleman, but it will take years to build up a herd. You need something that will bring you in a little money quickly to enable you to carry on. Plant a few acres of peanuts."

"Phew!" whistled Merry. "Peanuts!"

"Yes," insisted Reid, "peanuts. And you'll find they'll prove a staunch friend while you're growing into a cattle king. It only takes elbow grease and a few cheap months to raise a crop of peanuts—but it takes four solid years to raise beasts for market. And then, have you thought of how you are going to get the mothers of your herd here? Then, when four years go by, how are you going to drove your fat beasts back over the Range and to Derby? Then there is the expense and long trip in the cattle boat to Fremantle, then Perth!"

Merry began to look thoughtful.

"You know what it costs even to start a 'baby' herd," said Reid grimly. "Now estimate the time and the losses before that herd increases to show one little return."

Merry scratched his head in a dazed sort of way.

"Good heavens," he said. "Why, I've never grown even a cabbage in my life! But peanuts in a country near two thousand miles from a market! Anyway, how on earth would I transport peanuts from Walcott Inlet to Perth?"

"Well, Port George IV mission is away up the coast. Their lugger brings stores up from Broome about every two months or so. We might arrange with them to take the Walcott Inlet crop and yours to Broome, from which an agent could ship them to Perth via Fremantle."

"Right!" said Merry. "Now, even if cost of transport doesn't eat up all profits, how the blazes am I going to get tons of bulky peanut loading from the Sale River over the ranges and down to the Inlet?"

"That's up to you."

"Right. I'll give it a go."

He did, and solved his own transport problem by bringing the peanuts over the mountains to the Inlet by camels. That camels could be worked over that rocky country had not been dreamt of. Packhorses could not have managed the bulk.

The three first camels he bought cheaply from a wandering dingo stiffener. Three mangy old camels they were, but they proved worthy of the respect that Merry, a horseman, soon entertained for them. As to the track from the Sale to the Inlet, he had to find the route and make the track himself, as all must do out there. As to the necessary "agricultural implements", he made them himself.

The mission was quite willing to help in sea transport with the lugger, season, time, and conditions being favourable. And the peanut venture, both for Munja aboriginal station and for Merry, proved a big success.

Merry built a roomier hut and a large storage shed with the bush material around, and he bought a few head of cattle. Then he began to toy with a great idea. He acted upon it. Sheep! As peanuts had proved quicker at producing a profit than cattle; and wool would grow faster than cattle, too.

It seemed fantastic—just as fantastic as peanuts—more so. For in the first place how on earth could any man get his breeding sheep across that tangle of ranges? And if any did arrive safely they might not live in this country—country on which no sheep had lived before.

Noonkanbah station, far away back over the Range on the Fitzroy side, sold him 850 old ewes at a shilling per head. (Think of that, sheepmen! And the deal was made only a few years before the last war.) Little old Bob Thompson with his cunning dogs and four aborigines drove the ewes over the big Range and the many ranges between, finding their own route, carrying the sheep on their shoulders across the Isdell and other waterways. This is a little epic of droving in present-day pioneering. The job occupied three months, the aborigines shepherding the wanderers when Thompson had to forge ahead and find a route over some particularly tricky stage. The ewes lambed on the way. All told, he lost only fifty.

He got them safely through. And it meant the end of the long, long trail for Bob. He stayed a few weeks with Merry, fell in love with the country, then pushed on on his own, found a green little valley between the Glenelg and Prince Regent rivers, and built the little bark hut that is his home today.

Meanwhile the energetic Merry was planting yet more peanuts and training a few of the Ngarinyin to do a little work. He had no serious active trouble with them, especially after he employed the quiet, alert half-caste, Joe. But during each harvesting of the peanuts danger threatened. For at that time, Wonambun men, and wild bushmen from the heads of the Moroe and Drysdale in particular, came glowering into camp. The lonely selection with its stores and priceless iron tools was a constant temptation to these gatherings of the sub-tribes. Suggestions were made to kill the white man. But these were argued against by the half-caste Joe, by the blackboys Merry had brought with him, and by some of the Ngarinyin who had taken a liking to Merry. It would not be worth their while, they argued, because of the "Big Trouble" the killing would bring upon them. The "Big Trouble" meant the certain arrival of the mounted police patrol. Thus the tribe and visitors could never agree. After the peanuts were harvested came the tribal time for walkabout, when the sub-tribes would split up again and wander away, still in a state of indecision. While month by month, season by season, Merry was making more native friends, digging in more and more firmly in the country that was to be his home.

Fred Merry, having now his land, his "house", his cultivation, sheep, dogs and native henchmen, decided that something was lacking. It dawned upon him at last. A wife!

Fred Merry is a likeable chap, a great worker too, and once he gets an idea he goes straight for it. There was only one eligible girl north of the Leopolds. There were only five or six white women in that large area, scattered along the coast. Mrs Reid at Walcott Inlet, several at Port George Mission Station farther north, several Sisters at the isolated Drysdale Mission farther north still. Vaguely Merry had heard of this girl. She was the daughter of the manager of Port George Mission, some sixty or seventy miles north-west. Merry wasn't

too sure of what his reception at the mission might be, for he wasn't exactly a deeply religious character. So he planned a casual surprise visit—just to see how they were getting along with the aborigines and farming, as it were. Meanwhile he could run his eye over the girl.

He rode off, having to find his own track; and a wild, picturesque track it was—with no white folk in sight until he got there. He found the Port George people a hearty people, a most hospitable people. And he found something more—the only girl in the world. He could have kicked himself. Here she was all the time, a merry little girl, a great housekeeper, and one who loved the bush. Why, she had been waiting for him all along and he hadn't known it.

In his love-making Merry employed whirlwind tactics, and he rode home full of dreams. He was going to call in the Ngarinyin and bribe them to help him plant a huge slice of the river-bank with peanuts. He was determined to do a lot of things in a great big hurry: and he was so jolly sure of himself that he nearly slipped.

Back over the Range far away lived a coming Cattle King, just getting nicely established. He was a friend of mine and, like Merry, another fine type of Australian. He, too, had pioneered some years earlier, and by now had built up a fine little herd. He, too, wanted a wife and—knew of the little prize away over the Range. Knew, too, in his own quiet way that she was one of the gamest little girls in all the great north-west. But he was more of the steady, "build well ahead" type. He had planned a well-established home and future before he would ask a wife to share it. And the culmination of his dream was well within sight.

Merry heard the whisper and got busy in earnest, for there is nothing like a shock to put life into a man. He carried the citadel by storm. The wedding took place away there on the isolated coast at Port George, with its narrow valleys and steep, wooded hills, and the mission with its white houses nestling down below. Missionary Love married them, and it was a great day. There were even two unexpected white guests, two sea wanderers who happened to blow along in a lugger. The bride started her honeymoon on horseback, taking two young Worara lubras to look after her. Blackboys drove the camels carrying her trousseau, packed up by the three or four whites, the half-castes and the aborigines amongst whom she had lived (except for school years down south), since she was a girl of six. Her eyes were misty as she turned for the last time to wave farewell to the tiny group on the mission veranda.

The second day out, and the blackboys blundered. Or it may have been Merry who had not given such clear instructions as usual. Sunset found them alone, no food, no blankets. Merry had told the boys where they were going to camp, but they had off-saddled the camels miles away. Merry spent his last match on smoke signals. But there came no answer. And black night settled upon the bush.

"Well, what shall we do?" he asked. "Stay here the night, or ride back?"

"Stay here, of course." She laughed. "I'm too tired to ride farther."

So he spread out the two saddle-cloths, swearing quietly to himself—for he had used his last match without thinking about a fire. The night promised bitter cold, and they were both ravenously hungry; and night in the open bush is lonesome indeed without a fire.

Merry was amazed when he heard the bride giggling to herself.

"Well I'll be damned!" he said aloud. After which everything seemed much more matey.

The young wife was immediately queen in her own domain, to the surprise of the dusky maids who came crowding around to gape at the first white woman of their lives. For they

found that she could go out into the bush, locate an edible yam vine, then dig out the yams with a stick and cook them. She knew many of the plants they knew and the secrets of preparing them for food; she could locate a "sugar-bag" (wild bees' nest) with the best; she could find the haunts of birds and animals, reptiles and fish. She understood the language of tracks almost as well as the lubras, and she certainly was not afraid of them. Amazed, they followed her out during her afternoon walks with dog and rifle and fishing-line. They were speechless, then shrieked with delight when she levelled the rifle and shot the first kangaroo. And after that she never failed to shoot meat for them. Quickly she learnt the nearby waterholes in the Sale, and the lubras watched delightedly as she hauled out the fish struggling on the magic hook of her fishing-lines. Soon she got to know the rocky hills and the legend attached to each, the stories of the pygmies, elusive fairy people who are seen only in a flash to vanish in the lily lagoons. Soon she was learning of the Sacred Places, of totem and group, and of the dream time when man first came upon the earth. Then, from a safe distance, the lubras pointed at and whispered about those particular places where the spirit babies await for a married girl to pass by.

At first Merry was afraid of his wife's wanderings, and ordered his most trusted men to follow her at a distance; for often she met bands of armed warriors, and always among these were killers. But they seemed to be awed by the way she handled that rifle.

There was many a surprise for the wild daughters of Eve before they became reconciled to the fact that this lively white girl had it over them all. When the house girls were conspiring together to put it over the white missus, it took them quite a time to realize that she understood the Worara dialect perfectly. When, with warning glances, they gossiped in Ngarinyin, it was only to find that she had picked up the Ngarinyin, too. Glumly they came to the conclusion there was no privacy at all about the place since the white missus had come.

As to Merry, he was also due for a few surprises. All his prized racehorse and other illustrated paper pictures that he had pasted on the white bark walls were presently covered over with quite presentable water-colours of the Sale, and of scenery around. A real garden, not only of vegetables but flowers, began to transform the place; and he soon found it growing actually pretty like the lovely waterhole near by. And as to the meals—well, he had never dined so well in his life. The air of neatness and tidiness in and about the house, and even in the storage sheds, seemed too unfamiliar to be real. In a surprisingly short time he learnt that the floor was not a place to throw clothes and odds and ends upon; nor were the living-room walls meant to be hung with hobble-chains and greased saddlery. Prized rubbish stacked in corners disappeared, their place taken by handy little knick-knacks in which a man could put things. He learnt, too, what ash trays were for. And there were always dry clothes when he came in out of the wet, and he had to leave his muddy boots outside. Yes, life was now just one surprise after another. But it was nothing to what was to come.

The lubras knew. With knowing glances they whispered that she had walked too near the spirit places they had warned her of. When Baby Merry was nearly due to arrive, Merry became increasingly frightened. Everything was prospering with him; but he had learnt now that he had something far more important than prosperity—one of the priceless wives of the world. This home, now such a real home, could never again be a home without her. There was not the vaguest possibility of getting medical attention, so he determined that the wife should hurry to Melbourne where her people had now gone. She refused. But Merry now changed from the easy going lover to the determined man.

They rode down to Walcott Inlet, then journeyed in the little lugger to Broome, Port

of Pearls. Then she took the aeroplane to Perth, while he returned to the Sale. What a trip for the girl wife after years in the wildest bush with her Worara friends! First the camel-team honeymoon, the great welcome corroboree of the Ngarinyin, and now aeroplanes, trains, motor cars, shops, cities.

The pioneer baby was born in Victoria. Very soon afterwards, with a police patrol, I happened to come riding to the Sale. And Merry could hardly spare time to put the billy on before he was reading her latest letter to mounted constable Laurie O'Neill.

"Take me back to the Sale. I long for the smell of the bush. I miss the bleat of the sheep in the evening, and the corroboree songs at moonrise."

"And that's that!" said Fred emphatically. "She flatly refuses to stay away any longer."

The world's great problem then was how to transport baby over the ranges, dangerous in places for a rider. Mrs Reid and Harry solved the question at Walcott Inlet. They would make a sedan chair out of the Reid cot. Fred's most dependable Ngarinyin tribesmen could then carry baby in the sedan cot over the mountain trail.

And one day the lugger appeared, gliding up the Inlet. There were great hulloa-ings from the Worara seamen aboard and answering shouts from the Ngarinyin, while at the landing Mrs Reid, Harold Reid and the youngsters waved to the little figure on the boat, the dogs barking furiously, and father Merry standing on one leg, then the other. What a home-coming for Baby Merry! Born in modern days—but a pioneer.

A few days of rest at the Reid home, eager talk of friends, of city and bush, and then came the carrying of the baby over the hills to home in the sedan cot, a cot already christened as a cot of pioneers. Fred Merry had brought with him the surest-footed of the Ngarinyin warriors, and what lusty rivalry there had been before the carriers of the chair had been finally selected!

Thus, like the son of a sheik in the Arabian hills, the baby pioneer was carried in state by his wild bodyguard. Thus he rode over the mountains in his little wooden cot, a toy tent as a palanquin to shelter him from the sun, the painted Ngarinyin before and behind, their knotted muscles gleaming, feathers in their hair. For forty miles, with this wild bodyguard of the Leopolds, proud of their tiny charge, he rode under the shadow of the Harding Range, his wondering eyes staring at the forest to either side which was but the giant grasses of the Kimberleys. As they wound among the timbered spurs he listened to the gurgling of creeks, saw the big black feet splashing in the foam as he was carried across a rock-bound river, "goo-gooed" at trees on the sky-line above as they carried him up some steep, winding incline. He listened to the thrill in the Ngarinyin voices as the hunting song was thrown back from rock and crag; smiled to the whistling of the afternoon birds; watched the great shadows come stealing from bastion and peak; gazed big-eyed at the camp-fire playing on the paperbark trunks.

Fantastic are the flame-figures that play upon those ghostly trees when night's velvet arms close all things in. After the little mother had tenderly tucked the mosquito-net around the resting sedan he smiled in sleep, with his mother and father wrapped in their blankets on each side of him, and the black lumps of the Ngarinyin slumbering around their fires, their long spears silhouetted point-up beside them.

It was wonderful, baby pioneer, if you can only vision it when a man. Alas, there will be no wild life left in Australia then. The crags of the Leopolds will stand but the Worara will have gone, the Wonambun will have gone, the great Ngarinyin will have gone—and lonely will be the flight of the black cockatoo.

TROPIC ISLES AND CORAL REEFS

by Frank McNeill

THE mystery and charm of tropic seas never fail to awaken in us the spirit of adventure. They conjure up memories of the exploits of intrepid sailors—the early mariners in tiny ships who first penetrated the close-held secrets of countries south of the equator. In this way Australians remember their country's romantic past, linked so intimately with the discoveries of Captain Cook. It was as late as 1770 when this great voyager prepared the first detailed chart of our eastern coastline. In his seventy-foot *Endeavour* he made the hazardous journey northwards to Possession Island at the tip of Cape York. There he took formal possession of the east coast for Britain. Never before had a ship sailed so dangerous and unknown a sea—a place dotted with islands, shoals and coral reefs. The way was through tortuous passages and shallows into a strange world of mystery and beauty. At a point near where Cooktown now stands the reefs seemed to close around the tiny ship in baffling array. She ran aground here and was all but lost on a treacherous coral bank.

Nowhere in the world is there a coastline protected by so effective a barrier as Australia's north-eastern boundary to the Coral Sea. Settlement in these northern parts is still sparse and somewhat pioneer in character. For those who deviate from the beaten track there is still adventure and the lure of exploration. For many years to come Australia's tropic isles and coral reefs will remain a traveller's paradise.

The maze of coral banks stretching from east of the town of Rockhampton northwards to Cape York and beyond has come to be known as the Great Barrier Reef. For a distance of twelve hundred miles this vast structure has reared its massive bulk hundreds of feet from sea floor to surface, there to baffle the long swells of the wide Pacific Ocean. It covers an area greater than any other field of coral in the world—some eighty thousand square miles. In places the crowded coral banks measure as much as forty-five miles across and, for the most part, are still only partially explored.

The mainland coast opposite the Great Barrier Reef nowhere faces deep sea. Intervening, there is a sea-washed shelf stretching eastwards from ten to one hundred miles; this slopes gradually from the shoreline to a depth of a hundred fathoms. The name, Continental Shelf, has been given to this shallow fringe which makes a step between the land

and the abyss. Beyond its edge the sea floor drops sharply away, and it is here that the real ocean depths begin. The Continental Shelf is the foundation on which the Great Barrier Reef has been built. Over it the corals have lived and developed, layer on layer, for countless centuries.

The development of this vast field of reefs is even now a tantalizing problem to scientists, but it can be accepted that the Great Barrier, initially, sprang from coral reefs growing at only comparatively shallow depths. There was either a gradual subsidence of a shallow sea floor or else a slow change in the water level. The innumerable reefs of the Great Barrier are primarily the work of the lowly polyps which possess an ability to extract calcium carbonate from seawater and deposit it in protecting layers about the soft flesh of their bodies. It was not the living coral growths alone which rose, bank upon bank, from the lower levels. Rather was it a gradual accumulation of living material and the dead waste of the reefs reduced to shingle, gravel and sand. As a whole, the structure can be likened to a great undersea rampart—a great bulk of calcium carbonate hundreds of feet high, built up and consolidated against the mighty forces of sea and tempest by the secretions of simple animals and plants; the rocks of ages past have contributed nothing to this great achievement of living organisms. On the ocean side a great surf beats incessantly, even in the calmest weather. As the long swells encounter the coral barrier, they rear up and topple with a roar and crash, spending themselves in a long smother of foam across the reef flats. As tide waters rise, no obstruction is visible but it is a stirring sight to see the long line of boiling shoal water, stretching seemingly from horizon to horizon. This springs up in mid-ocean without any apparent cause, as strange as it is magnificent.

For the most part dangerous, intricate and tortuous channels separate mile- and two-mile-long reef heads, and this makes the Great Barrier highly dangerous for navigation. The only vessels that now penetrate the crowded coral banks are the small luggers whose hardy crews seek for the fish and other products during a few months of each year. Formerly the maze of reefs was the hunting ground of Japanese poachers in powerfully engined sampans and other small vessels. Among other interests of those pre-war years they were bent on the gathering of pearl-shell, trochus shell for button making, and trepang or *bêche-de-mer*. It is known that they had thoroughly prepared charts to work from, the result of their own surveys. Only just before the last war began was there any definite Government move to frustrate the trespassers, when the arrest of vessels and confiscation of cargoes figured in the news.

Clear, deep passages across the reef barrier are comparatively few, and most are tortuous. Of the ten openings only a small number are navigated by regular shipping. Trinity Opening near Cairns and Flinders Passage off Townsville are among the largest. Between the coral barrier and the mainland is a virtually enclosed seaway, studded with islands and isolated reefs. The width varies from fifteen to seventy miles. These inner waters are comparatively calm. In the absence of ocean swell, only the cyclonic storms of the summer season bring really dangerous conditions. Often during the winter and spring seasons (July to September) a millpond smoothness may last for days. For a visitor it is an experience to travel eastwards from the mainland for forty and fifty miles over a dead flat sea.

The enclosed sea channel has been called Australia's Grand Canal. It is the steamer highway for the passage of interstate and foreign shipping—always within sight of the mainland. To ensure safe navigation the shipmasters have the services of the famed Torres Strait Pilots, who conduct them through dangerous northern sections where the maze of

coral banks swing quite close in to the coast. Here and in the wider waters of Torres Strait beyond the tip of Cape York we have probably the world's most treacherous seaway.

Close to the mainland, where sea depths vary from five to twenty fathoms, the waters may carry a murkiness due to sediment from the discharge of rivers. In wider offshore parts, where depths of forty-five fathoms may be plumbed, the sea is almost invariably clear and blue. It is a richer blue than the sky it reflects, and the range of cobalt hues is found to coincide with the varying depths. Looking over the side of a vessel the bottom is often clearly visible in over a hundred feet of water.

The islands of the enclosed coastal seaway are mostly high, extending for four hundred miles or so from the Keppel Islands in the south, near Rockhampton, to Lizard Island in the north, beyond Cooktown. Rarely does a ship traveller lose sight of one of these before another rises into view. They are actually remnants of a mountain range. Ages ago, when ocean waters overflowed a former coast, they drowned the plains and valleys, leaving the former peaks and ridges to project above the surface.

The most crowded collection of high islands are those of the Cumberland and Whitsunday groups, between Mackay and Bowen. The Whitsunday group protects the ship's passage of the same name. The southern entrance to the passage is less than a mile wide, bordered by two chains of lofty islands. Many are well wooded with patches of tropical growth. The most striking feature is rich stands of hoop pine, which take precarious hold on rocky slopes and stand out boldly on ridges against the sky. Here and there are massive rocky crags. Hidden among the island heights are picturesque gorges penetrated by the sea. Girdling the shores are innumerable white sand beaches—sunlit places which beckon a visitor to the shade of tree-covered strands. In striking contrast are magnificent bluffs and escarpments rising sheer like battlements, right from the water's edge. In clear blue waters just offshore are many coral banks, peopled with colourful marine life. Tropical shellfish, crabs, sea-urchins, sea stars, bêche-de-mer, and multi-hued fish.

Sunsets have an added grandeur against grape-blue peaks and ridges, and the coral reefs turn to orange, purple and red. On still, clear nights starlight is reflected on a glassy sea.

There are about seventy islands in the vicinity of Whitsunday Passage. They range from an acre or so to the twenty-four square miles of Whitsunday Island, one of the largest off the Queensland coast. Many sheltered waterways invite pleasure cruising and there are at least five island resorts for tourists, who may enjoy big game and hand-line fishing or just laze along the beaches. A little to the east are extensive coral reefs on the landward side of the Great Barrier, well exposed during the good daylight low tides between June and September. To visit them is a delightful experience. The Whitsunday Islands so captivated Zane Grey that he ceremoniously nailed his hat to a tree on Hayman Island to signify his resolve to come back.

Only eighty or ninety years ago the aborigines of the Whitsunday group were a virile tribe living in undisputed possession of their island paradise. They paddled their frail bark canoes to the heads of the inlets, and from there carried them over ridges to the opposite shore. Today the few survivors have been gathered in Government reserves, the largest being on Great Palm Island, just north of Townsville. Some work on the luggers which sail about the Barrier Reef, though most of these vessels are manned by Torres Strait Islanders.

In striking contrast to the high islands are the little coral isles known as cays. Generally found farther out from the coast, they are low and flat, only a few feet above sea

level. Seen from a ship the distant coral isle is little more than a pencilled line on the horizon. At closer range it looks more like a raft of bushes floating on the sea, but often there is only a bare bank of coral shingle above the waves. In some cases the reef platform on which a coral isle rests extends for miles and covers thousands of acres; viewed from the beach it may stretch to the horizon. Beyond the terraced reef edge, where falling tide waters cascade into the sea, the depth increases rapidly to five or eight fathoms. Around these parts the living corals are to be seen in great profusion. Big caverns and deep gutters honeycomb the reef edge. Their walls and floors are clothed with growths of delicate shape and hue, like an exquisite garden. Among the varied colours browns and ochres predominate, but there are brilliant touches of orange, blue, mauve, red and green. Through the coral fronds and over the coral beds swim fishes of quaint form, often as brightly coloured as butterflies. Under the ledges and in the crannies are jet-black sea-urchins bearing electric-blue spots and long spines finer than knitting-needles. Sea stars, some bluer than the sky, and *bêche-de-mer* lie on patches of white coral sand. There are innumerable clams with gaping shells, no two alike in their brilliant colouring. Occasionally a giant clam is seen, with a mouth perhaps a foot or more across.

A sojourn on a green and lonely coral isle, far from the artificialities of civilization, is something to be remembered.

During the summer months millions of sea-birds may be found nesting. The sleek, white-capped noddy terns swarm in the pisonia forest—as many as eighty nests in a single tree, weighing down the branches like crops of fruit. Below in the sandy earth of the forest floor are the honeycombed burrows of the much larger sooty mutton-birds. All day long high piping cries fill the air, and with the setting of the sun myriads of birds flock home from the sea. At nightfall, on a rising tide, the bulky green and loggerhead turtles come out of the sea to the coral sands, dragging themselves laboriously up to the coarse grass, where they make big hollows and lay an astounding clutch of 150 or more soft-shelled eggs. Some coral isles are so favoured by egg-laying turtles that, by the end of the summer season, their strands resemble a miniature battlefield with innumerable excavated sand craters. The babies, left to incubate a foot or more below the surface of the warm sand, make their way to the surface and head unerringly seaward. They never know a mother's care and fend for themselves from the very moment of their hatching, and so hordes of them fall prey to voracious gulls and predatory fishes.

As a tourist playground, the Great Barrier Reef has no equal in the world. It is the richest of our natural legacies, with a future which will no doubt be linked with that of the mainland of Queensland, in many ways our most beautiful State.



Swift and graceful swimmers, turtles are lumbering creatures on land, and good fun for kiddies intent on a ride. On tropical beaches, from Queensland to Western Australia, turtles are much prized for the tasty eggs they lay in the sand.



THE TRAVELLING LIBRARY organized by world-famous pianist, Hephzibah Menuhin (Mrs Lindsay Nicholas), to serve children in isolated parts of the Western District of Victoria.

Libraries for children are not uncommon in cities and large towns of Australia, but children of the Outback rely for books on school libraries, the

Bush Book Club, and country services of Public Libraries. In a very few areas, bookmobiles operate. Some are especially designed vehicles of professional dignity; others are refitted army trucks that have the gay appeal of a caravan. They visit small schools and townships, always greeted gleefully by the children, who treasure the books.

FAIRIES AND KOALA BEARS

by Eve Pownall

FOR some reason, many Australians who should know better think that we, as a nation, have had little or no dealings with the fairy folk in literature. Actually, we imported the fairytale into Australia, as we did most other trends and topics in children's books, as well as their treatment, and the curious thing is that although the country changed most of the other themes into something recognizably Australian, the fairytale proper—gauzy wings, enchantments and all—still persists in its original garb, in spite of adult scorn and criticism that it does not fit becomingly into our national landscape.

Until quite recently, by far the greater number of books in the hands of our child readers were of oversea origin. This was perhaps inevitable when the country was young and its people busy with the task of settling into a new land. In the days when the pioneers were ringbarking trees to make room for the sheep and the homestead, there was little time to pin the local scene to paper with the written word, so the first tales woven under Australian skies are lost for want of a reporter. A lullaby to the baby, a story for the child toddling about at the heels of a woman occupied with unending work—these went out on the air and were lost. Certainly they were not listed in the State records that tell us when the first mill was erected, where the first brewery stood, when the first play was enacted. No one at the time thought of jotting down the early stories that were given to the young in the brown land at the bottom of the world.

The first books read by Australian children—by those who could read, for education was not a widespread commodity in the early days—must have come into the country in the carpet bags and saratoga trunks of the settlers. They would have been chosen from the lists of English writers of the period, of whom Maria Edgeworth was the most outstanding. They all had a strong bias towards moral uplift; sin and death were constantly recurring topics.

Victoria had been Queen of England for a number of years when Australia published its first book for children: *A Mother's Offering To Her Children*, by "A Lady Long Resident In New South Wales". It was a prim little book, written in dialogue, wherein Mamma gave instruction and information to her dutiful daughters. It seems positively frivolous alongside children's missionary newspapers circulating at the time; one of which asks the young

reader: "Did you never see the little smiling infant sicken and die upon its mother's breast? Did you never follow your little playmate to the grave, and feel, as you left him there, that you too might die like him?" It is unlikely that the later Australian characteristic of giving the young "a fair go" had yet developed. We imported ideas as well as cattle and sheep, but whereas the livestock proved adaptable pioneers, quickly developing individual characteristics, it was a long, long time before children's books really showed national features.

However, stilted prose and cautionary dialogue did not keep the landscape out. One of the earliest Australian stories for the young, *Mr Bunyip*, or *Mary Somerville's Ramble*, by J. R. Lockyear, introduces an Australian background, as well as the Bunyip, the debbil-debbil of the Australian aboriginal. And a garrulous companion he turned out to be, with his homilies on laziness, the need for thrift, and the Evils of Strong Drink! Even so, Mary was sorry to see him go, and "felt she had lost a Friend".

The kind of diet that was given to the toddler in the seventies we can only surmise. He was probably luckier than his elder brothers and sisters. Mother Goose is fun, and Mother Goose was read to toddlers in Victorian England, with counting and clapping rhymes. But these migrants, although they must have lived in the country, made no attempt to adapt themselves to the local scenery, and no one imitated them.

Meanwhile, overseas the bright star of "Alice" had risen. How this revolution in covers, which showed that a child's book did not *have* to be concerned with death and damnation, reached what was then popularly termed the Antipodes is another national mystery. However, carried by the tall sails of some unnamed windjammer, arrive here she did, and in a few years she had an Australian imitator, who gratefully acknowledged his debt to Lewis Carroll, when *Bertie and the Bullfrogs* was published in Adelaide. It was full of quips and puns, substituted possums and cockatoos for Red Queens and Frog Footmen, and was probably an oasis in the desert to the very-much-admonished young of the period. It was the first of a long chain of would-be Alices. Scarcely a year since then has passed without another, full of characters who talk and talk without getting much forrader, nor is Australia the only nation that produces them.

By far the most robust of early books written for young readers here were the adventure stories, which were told with some gusto, and did come to grips with the country, its idiom, conditions and climate. But the angle of writing betrays them: it is that of the newcomer, the onlooker, not of the native-born. Representative of the species is *Tom's Nugget, A Story of the Australian Gold Fields*, by Professor J. F. Hodgetts, who visited the country. It deals with "the year 1851 . . . when the good Prince Albert was still alive, and when everything seemed to promise peace, plenty, and gold". It gives an excellent picture of the coming and going of the time, with its descriptions of life on a sailing-ship, Melbourne flooded with emigrants, and the hardy life of the goldfields. Most of these tales show the philosophy of the Victorians, who were lavish in their story-telling and never skimmed the plot for the sake of another few thousand words. Books of adventure in early Australia were packed full of incident, much of which Ion Idriess today would not despise. Like him, they were in the habit of mixing a local story into the theme to heighten the interest. By contrast, our modern adventure stories are on lower levels, with the exception of the Idriess books, which are a mixture of travel, adventure, and legend.

Different again are Mary Grant Bruce's stories of the Linton family. By the time she had begun her "Billabong" series, a few years before the first war, the frontiers had been pushed back, and station life, though it could be exciting, was not particularly dangerous. Mrs

Bruce, too, had this advantage: she was writing of a scene she had been born to, not come upon by way of a migrant ship. By her time, the matrix had set, and the national features had emerged.

It was in the nineties that the action of the country's acid really began to eat through the oversea influence in children's writing. (We see the same kind of thing in early engravings. The first artists made our Australian aboriginal very African in appearance, and it was some time before gum-trees looked like gums.) Ethel Turner was the outstanding figure of this era. She wrote the same kind of stories that were being produced for the young of Britain: stories of family life, with several adult characters, and a good proportion of writing *about* children, rather than *for* them. Her writing was fresh and unaffected, her characters were identifiable Australian types, and she was hailed as an author on whom appeared the hallmark of greatness. This prophecy was never quite fulfilled, but for many years Ethel Turner did give the young Australian reader from about ten years of age a picture of children in situations such as they themselves might face, against a background that they recognized as their own.

Other writers in the Turner tradition have never been quite so successful, with the exception of Mary Grant Bruce, who did for an average bush family what Ethel Turner did for the suburban family. Present-day authors who use the domestic scene have not created characters as distinct as *Seven Little Australians*, although several have had success with "The Twins In Trouble" formula, and stories that mix a little family life with a missing relative and the almost inevitable school play. The best of them do have Australian features and some connexion with Australian life, but we are still awaiting the writer who will give the young teen-age reader a vivid story of a migrant family's adjustment to the country, or who will show how life goes on in some special section of the national scene. Her style (it is almost always women who write this type of story) will probably be very different from that of Ion Llewellyn Idriess, who is perhaps the most individual of Australian writers read by young people. The Australia he puts into covers is almost as unfamiliar to the dwellers in our cities as it would be to residents of London or New York. The Kimberley Ranges, the vast Dead Heart, Crocodile Land—Idriess knows them all, and sets them, rough-hewn, on his pages, to the fascination of the descendants of the pioneers. Here at least is one local writer whose style has grown from the rocks and sand of the country of which he writes.

But if domestic story and tale of adventure have become good Australians, what can we say of fantasy and the land of fay? The fairy tale on which so much adult scorn has been poured is the pale descendant of the Brothers Grimm, the story-teller of Denmark, Hans Christian Andersen, and of the folk tales of the Little People that we have gathered from many sources. These small and dainty creatures, whose golden crowns and flowing tresses are revolting to the average adult, spell Romance for the small girl of about six to eight years of age, and the land they come from is her first concept of Utopia, where everything is as it should be.

In spite of what we like to think of our virile nationhood, Australia has produced more than a few fairy stories. These, to have their full effect, must always be illustrated. Ida Rentoul Outhwaite's drawings for Alice Rentoul's stories show a degree of craftsmanship that other artists in the same line have not equalled. These drawings alone would almost be enough for any small lass at the fairytale age. They have all the necessary thistledown quality, where everything seems lighter than air: fairy creatures, enchanted glades, etherealized gum-trees. As a final death blow to the adult critic, I must point out that even the rabbits have glamour.

Pixie O'Harris gets something of the same quality into some of her work. Her story of the sea-sprites, *Pearl Pinkie and Sea Greenie*, is pictured with the detail beloved by the young feminine reader: sea-babies, shells turned into a desirable residence, minute coloured pebbles making a mosaic to the front door.

Because of the scorn of the critics, Australian publishers today are a little wary of the fairytale, and certainly at its worst it is rather like a meal of candy-floss. But ask any children's librarian whether Australian children read fairytales, and the answer is always yes. So perhaps we should not waste our energy reviling the fairy story, but use it in writing better ones.

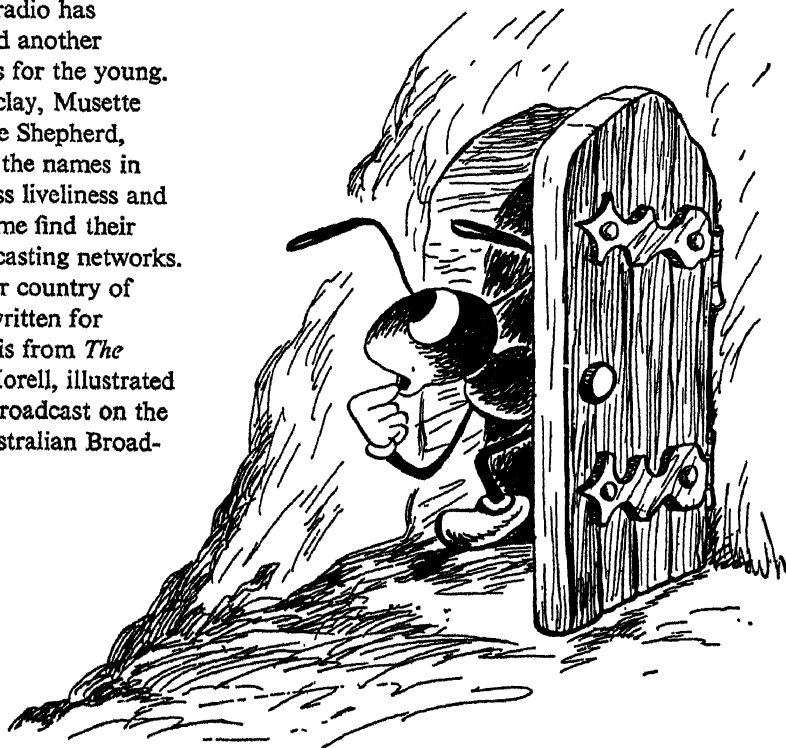
In the world of animal fantasy, Australians feel themselves much more at home. This is the kind of thing we like to feel belongs to the Australian character and outdoor life. It is also the kind of thing adults can accept without feeling clumsy, having been conditioned to it by Mr Disney. In this type of story, the Australian background becomes the chief actor. Kangaroos, wallabies, possums, native bears, gum-blossoms—they roam through the pages clothed as humans more often than not, behaving as humans should or should not. Usually they belong to a story that has action and movement (something that their forerunner of the seventies, *Bertie and the Bullfrogs*, lacked). Their modern era in Australia dates from just before the twenties, with Norman Lindsay's rampageous saga of Bunyip Bluegum, Bill Barnacle and Sam Sawnoff, who were constantly beset with difficulties over the ownership of "The Magic Pudding", and May Gibbs's *Snugglepot and Cuddlepie*.

May Gibbs was advised to embark on her stories, which she illustrates as well as writes, as the local answer to the Beatrix Potter boom then reaching Australia. Her work, however, owes little or nothing to oversea inspiration, unless her careful craftsmanship can be traced



"The Puddin'" in safe custody with his rightful owners—from Norman Lindsay's *The Magic Pudding*.

The insatiable appetite of radio has supplied another medium and another market for Australian writers for the young. Charles Swain, Edmund Barclay, Musette Morell, Ruth Park, Catherine Shepherd, G. K. Saunders are a few of the names in this field. Their stories possess liveliness and a distinct national idiom. Some find their way overseas to other broadcasting networks. A few appear in print in their country of origin, usually somewhat rewritten for publication. The illustration is from *The Antics of Algy* by Musette Morell, illustrated by Lahm. It was originally broadcast on the Children's Session of the Australian Broadcasting Commission.



to Potter influence. May Gibbs has had a great effect on the development of fantasy in the Australian manner. Her characters, so lovingly drawn and so consistent, are matched by her drawings, which are very often a commentary on life. She has had many imitators, but none has achieved her interpretation to childhood of animal behaviour in human terms. Perhaps we are too close to her work to gauge its true value, but I believe that later critics will find in May Gibbs one of the moulding forces in the development of the national character in our writing for children.

No one has yet usurped May Gibbs's place in her own field, but two present-day artists, Nan Fullarton and Edwina Bell, are developing a skill in portraying Australian animals that possesses a quality hitherto lacking in such work, the quality of winsomeness, or what the child calls "cuddleness". These artists have appeared since the war, which gave the Australian writer and illustrator greater opportunities for being published than they had ever had, when they were called on to fill the gaps left by shortages of oversea material. This period also saw the arrival of another kind of animal story, the life-cycle story where the chief actor, named and characterized, represents the whole of his kind. Leslie Rees has had his greatest success in this field. *Shy the Platypus*, illustrated most tellingly by W. Cunningham, made book-production history, while *Karrawingi the Emu*, produced the following year, was even better, Karrawingi being a vigorous character whose life story gave Cunningham the opportunity to show the power of his craft and his ability to emphasize drama. Since then, Rees has added other titles to the series, which have a definite place in the Australian writer's scheme to show his own background to the Australian child.

Meanwhile, the forces that began to affect children's book production overseas in the twenties and sent the sales of what the trade calls "juveniles" sky-rocketing, were being felt in this country. For some time, only librarians and teachers were very aware of them.

Writers got to know them slowly, and publishers more slowly still, so it was really not till the war that any of the new ideas were tried out here. Then the kindergarten age benefited. Elisabeth MacIntyre wrote and drew *Ambrose the Kangaroo*, followed it by *The Willing Donkey* and eventually with *Katherine*, a very alive story of an Australian child told in couplets, and showing something of both city and country life in Australia. Others in the same field are Katherine Mellor (her *Traffic Lights* appealed to all young Australians who knew something of road laws), Olive Mason (whose *Quippy*, illustrated by Cunningham, proved to be a most attractive young duckling), and Edith Lanser.

Although we recognize our indebtedness to oversea influences in fantasy, adventure, and the here-and-now story for kindergarten folk, there is one field we must develop alone, and that is our treatment of the dark-skinned Australian native, the aboriginal. As yet we have done little with the subject. Mrs Aeneas Gunn gave us a classic picture of the native people in *The Little Black Princess*, but it is a picture that belongs to all Australians and not only to the young. Frank Dalby Davison's *Children of the Dark People* is a tale of magic based on aboriginal lore. May Thomas's *Gundy* has an engaging pictorial quality, but needs simplifying for modern kindergarten needs. Other writers have depicted for our children something of the ways and legends of the dark Australians, but none have shown them to such effect as the Durack sisters, Elizabeth and Mary. Their *The Way of the Whirlwind* is a fine piece of book production that presents the aboriginal to the young with drama and sensitivity.

Today, Australian writing for children seems to have hardly passed its beginning, but at least it *is* a beginning. We have passed the stage when our background was so new that it drew the eye too far away from people, especially children, their viewpoint and standards. Kangaroos and wildflowers, sheep and gums are still part of Australia, but then so are we, and we can now weave our background into our writing with no more self-consciousness than the British weave the bluebell or the American speaks of maple syrup. No longer are we pioneers in the physical sense, so our minds should be free to pioneer in the world of thought, and one of the best things we can do is to produce stories of beauty and truth for our children.

As the world shrinks and nations come closer together, it is certain that Australia will continue to be influenced by oversea writing for children. But as our writers grow in awareness of children's needs, the ideas that have crossed the oceans will be filtered through our national character, and only what we need for our growth will be absorbed. Then the Australian book for children can reverse the role of the migrant and begin to influence other nations with the strength of its own artistry.

THE PRICE OF PEARL-SHELL

by Colin Simpson

THURSDAY ISLAND, it came to me suddenly there in the bar of the Federal, was just like Henry Sullivan.

The best diver in Torres Strait had been in the bar all morning and he had drunk two bottles of rum, which is a lot of rum, but Henry could still stand at the bar and he could still walk, though he was starting to weave when he walked, gripping on the floorboards with his bare feet. His trousers hung low on his hips and his silk shirt, unbuttoned right down his thick chest, billowed out untidily as the breeze filled it. The sou'-easter streamed in off the sea through the bar's front door and would go on streaming until about November. Then it would be the nor'-wester, the wet storms and the lay-up season.

Thursday Island was no sprucer than Henry Sullivan. All down the street, waved over by a few palms along the beach-front; the weatherboards needed paint worse than Henry needed a shave, and if Henry looked as though he had slept in his clothes, so did T.I. Henry was a big drinker and T.I. was like that—Thirsty Island, the old gag was still right. Henry Sullivan was half-caste, the way T.I. was, black and white. Henry was making £1500, maybe £2000, a year; T.I. was in the money with shell at the all-time high of £600 a ton. Henry didn't look, ashore, the best diver in the Strait, and Thursday Island didn't look like the world's No. 1 producer of pearl-shell. T.I. was though, as surely as Henry Sullivan was No. 1 diver for Bowdens.

The Bowden Pearling Company was the concern with as many luggers as the rest together. But it didn't put up a lot of front; at T.I. nothing did, and that was part of what I liked about the place. This was in 1947 and the whole fleet was only twenty-six luggers; a year later there were eighty.

From where I had my gin-squash I could see the luggers out on the water, which still seemed incredibly blue, beyond the wongai-tree. Some said if you ate the fruit of the wongai-tree you had to come back to T.I. There they rode, the luggers, pointing up the run of the tide. Low-hulled and long-lined as a clipper's baby, two-masted for a ketch rig. If you want figures: length fifty feet, beam fifteen, weight fifteen or twenty tons. Some with the band of sheathing copper diagonally across the bows, which is good against fangs of reef coral. There they rode, the most picturesque craft that set keel to water around the coasts of Australia.

Henry Sullivan had started to sing. It was an odd, plaintive mixed-up sort of song that began with, "*When Moses was a little child . . .*" and ended with "*Pickle my bones in alcohol*", only the way Henry sang the last word it was "alcorol". But the song had that almost Negro-spiritual quality which only a dark-skinned singer can give to a song and Henry was pretty dark. Getting Henry upstairs was something like moving a piano—but when we got up to my room he could still sing and he could still answer simplified questions.

"Henry, why do you drink this much?"

"I'm a diver. When I come ashore I gotta drink. I don' drink when I dive. I wasn' drinking yes'd'y, was I?"

The day before we had been out on the *Waikato*, one of Bowden's luggers, and Henry was testing diving gear to see if the new compressor would give enough air to work two divers below; and Henry had been utterly sober and efficient. But it had become a pearling-port tradition that when they came ashore the leading divers were the leading drinkers and not only because they could afford to buy more liquor. I had been told that Henry drank because he thought each next trip would be his last: "Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we dive." I pushed that at him in a question.

"No, I ain't frightened of death!" he said and it wasn't just an answer, it was a declaration, perhaps too much of a declaration. He meant death from diving, from paralysis or anything he might encounter under the sea.

"Look, I only got nine goddam toes!" Henry, sitting on my bed, held up the foot with only four toes. The other toe had been taken off after the stingray got him.

There is still enough risk in diving as it is done in Australian pearling for this diving to be one of the few remaining occupations that are elemental. By elemental I mean a job where you match yourself against a natural element, against something not tamed or humanly conditioned, the way a bull-fighter does as the most outright and spectacular example. A job with the constant awareness in it that death is around and about and, although you may be careful always, your element has factors not predictable or controllable, and without any slip-up on your part circumstances suddenly can arise that mean good-bye. It is a cold thing to have in the back of your skull, that awareness impacted with a quiveriness like an indicator needle, and when a man comes away from a job like that it is not surprising that he wants the warmth and the let-down he finds in a bottle or with a woman.

"Henry," I said, and I don't think it was corny, "what do you want out of life?"

"I don't want nothing at all." There was something like resentment in his eyes, but it wasn't at me; I don't know what it was at. "Just gimme a helmet an' corselet an' I'll go down the bottom of the sea an' I'll be satisfied." That is what he said word for word; but you need to have heard him say it.

It is a lot easier to get at the facts of diving than at what goes on inside the skull of Henry Sullivan. "Helmet and corselet," he said, and that is all they dive in at Thursday Island. Over at Broome in Western Australia the water is colder and they use dress. But at T.I. a diver has all his gear on when the brass globe of helmet, with the face-glass and the air-control valve at the side, is screwed on to the metal corselet collar-piece attached to canvas, which is loaded with lead weights back and front. So the diver looks like only the head and shoulders of the diver in the picture-books.

With the helmet and corselet Henry Sullivan wears a grey flannel shirt and a pair of thick khaki trousers. Instead of the lead-soled boots that weigh fourteen pounds each but

feel light enough under water, Henry wears sand-shoes. The pressure of air pumped down into the helmet keeps the water level down below his chin.

"It's easier to get around this way than in the dress," Henry said. He talked about diving dress as though it were something as cumbrous and as out of date as the inflated figure that used to advertise Michelin Tyres. Diving with just helmet and corselet has developed at T.I. in the past fifteen years. A few were doing it when I was there in 1933, but dress was the regular thing, and a good deal underneath the dress, too, to cushion the body against heavy air pressures. When I went down myself in a few fathoms, just to see how it was, the Japs not only put me in underclothing of flannel but wound strips and strips of blanketing around my middle. Today it is almost all helmet and corselet. The only diving dress I saw at T.I. belonged to some lads out of the Air Force who had decided that pearling was the adventurous life for them, and T.I. laughed tolerantly at the newchums who had brought a diving dress to go diving. Some divers still like to wear a bit more than the corselet, so they wear the upper part of the dress, the "half-dress".

The other major change of recent years has been the change-over from hand-pumps to engine-power compressors. The hand-pump, with two natives swinging up and down on a double-ended pump handle all the while the diver is below, is a thing of the past, and about time too.

Before the war, when most of the fleet was Japanese divered and skippered, Thursday Island used to ship about 1100 tons of pearl-shell a year fished by the Torres Strait luggers. In 1947, with the industry going through the pains of re-establishment and with gear hard to get, and new divers, the catch was only about 300 tons; but that was worth almost as much as the 1100 tons had been pre-war. The price was as high as £600 a ton because supply was short. T.I. could still call itself the world's top producer with 300 tons, worth £180,000 or, since the shell was going to the American market, 500,000 dollars. Half a million dollars was a lot more important than £180,000; and that was the importance of the industry to Australia's dollar-hungry economy. Viewed through Prime Minister Chifley's fiscal spy-glass from Canberra, Henry Sullivan down there with his head in a metal ball, drifting over the sea-bed behind his lugger and stopping to pick up shell that caught his eye, was bringing up dollars.

In his thirty-nine years with Bowdens, tall Jack Dunwoodie, the manager, had never known the price of shell so high. With shell at £600 a ton, a king diver could make £2000 a year, he said. The way they worked was that Henry Sullivan, for instance, operated under contract with the pearling company on a percentage basis. Henry skippered the lugger, provisioned it, paid the crew of seven men and a second diver. The engineer might be white, but the other crew would be half-caste or Torres Strait Islands boys. In the case of Henry's lugger, the second diver, Jimmy, was half-caste, of Filipino and Norfolk Island blood. The bigger Henry's catch of shell, the bigger his percentage: it went up on a sliding scale. The deck crew got £15 a month and keep. Seventeen-stone Paiwan Blanket was a crew boy. Some have wonderful names like that; a Murray Island boy was christened Pudding Gana. If Paiwan Blanket went down as a "trial" diver he got £20 a month and a bonus on the shell he brought up.

A few white divers are still in pearling. Hilton ("Curly") Bell was doing all right at T.I., and while I was there Jack Child and Dick Somers came across from Darwin hoping for better luck in the Strait. Pearling began with white divers. Billy Banner fished the first pearl-shell in Torres Strait from his brig *Julia Percy* in 1868, but it was plentiful enough then

in the virgin beds to use natives to get it in the shallows. Diving dress came in 1874, and white men did the diving until the Japs took over.

"There have been some good white divers," Jack Dunwoodie said, "but it's no life for a white man. The best divers and the best skippers of luggers were the Japs. One doesn't like to say good of the Japs after what they have done, but there's no question about it. As divers they were good. And they looked after the gear and the boats."

Master pearlers would have the Japs back in the industry tomorrow, but Australian public opinion and Government opinion are so strongly against it that they do not appear to be in the race, even to get a few Japanese diver-trainers to school local and Malay talent. Broome had ~~an~~ Australian-born Japanese in its pre-war community, but the Japanese in Australia did not approximate the Nisei Japs of the United States and Hawaii; they had no such soil-roots and transferred allegiance but only a precarious foothold to the three pearling ports, Broome, Darwin and Thursday Island. Outside of these places there is nothing to temper the bitter feelings of Australians remembering P.O.W. camps like Sandakan and the Burma-Siam railway and what the Japs did to Australian nurses on Banka Island. But the master pearler got along well with his Jap divers, better than he does with his divers now.

Unquestionably the Japs were better divers than the new crop of Malays and half-castes; for one thing the Japs had been at it longer and learnt more. The pearler argues that they are better constituted to diving than the new crop can ever be. At Broome last year (1948) it was like the old story of the Army cook. Complaining that his luggers wouldn't stay out long enough, the divers running back to port every few weeks or so to see their (white) wives, the pearler had little hesitation, particularly where there was any sign of militancy about working conditions, in calling the Malay diver a bastard; with the old corollary of "Who called the bastard a diver?"

The Jap diver was usually an indefatigable fellow with a sense of mission behind his diligence. The Malay is lighter hearted, easier going, softer fibred, which does not please the pearler, who also sees the Malay as dangerously receptive to such apoplectic doctrines as communism. And whenever a pearler sees Red at Broome a Malay gets shipped back to Malaya.

At Thursday Island I asked Jack Dunwoodie who was the best diver he had ever had or known.

"Tomo, a Jap, was a remarkable diver, but undoubtedly the king of divers was a Jap we used to call King; his real name was Kinzayomen Kamei. He died down below in thirty-five fathoms. Tomo went down and found him dead, out of his helmet. King used to make a lot of money, and he had six banks on Thursday Island—the six pubs. Underwater he was as at home as a fish, and he drank like one."

King died in 1933, just before I got to T.I. the first time, and theorists were saying that he suicided. They said that he had been on a terrific bat ashore and that he went down with a hangover still on him and feeling black with alcoholic remorse; but nobody really knows. There was a big Japanese funeral feast in the cemetery over the hill at T.I. and another tall white tombstone with Japanese characters wriggling down it was added to the graveyard where many divers lie buried, and they didn't die of old age, or suicide either.

King was a pioneer of helmet and corselet diving. Before that he was a record dress diver who had gone down to forty-seven fathoms, that is, 282 feet; and anything over thirty fathoms can be reckoned dangerous business. Where King went down to forty-seven was

off Darnley Island, in the deeps that are called the Diver's Graveyard. King also thought up a new way of trepanging—fishing *bêche-de-mer*. Instead of native skin-divers having to go right to the bottom and claw the sea-slug off, they could drop on it a weighted spike with barb and pull it up. The Chinese market bought the *bêche-de-mer* to make a jelly-like soup so rich in vitamins or what-have-you that it was supposed to restore lost sexual vigour. There is no market, and no *bêche-de-mer* fishing in Australian waters, since war-torn China banned it as a luxury import.

The Japs would spare no effort to recover the body of a diver who had died on the sea-bottom. Superstition said that any diver encountering a diver-corpse left below was marked for death himself. He would be better off to meet up with the Great Groper, which might turn and swim away without even fouling his air-line.

The subject of divers' under-sea perils is one that has been pretty much mauled by hundreds of writers of minor magazine fiction and adventure novels. The octopus is their firm favourite. Legions of divers—some of them belonging to a race of supermen who can open their shell under water, and extract 'an inevitably priceless pearl—have died, on paper-pulp, gripped by the tentacles of octopuses that loom from the illustrations even larger than the ones of forty-feet armspread actually recorded in Australian waters. The octopus is an interesting, as well as a highly graphic, creature: it can whizz backwards through the water by jet propulsion, shooting water out of its respiratory orifice, and it can crack crabs with its suckers. But it would have about as much chance of digesting a diver as the mosquito would of taking in a camel. Divers, who also read magazines, often see an octopus "lurking" between what they call the high-spots of a coral bottom. But I know of no case of a diver ever being "taken", or even attacked, by an octopus.

The Great Groper, or giant cod, is something else again. Growing as big as 600 pounds, with a mouth and gullet to match, it is said to be capable of swallowing a man whole, and with all divers I talked to it bulked largest and most genuinely in the list of underwater dreads, though few had seen one. More divers have had experience of the diamond- (or devil-) ray, which can measure up to twenty feet across its great flat body. There is not much reason why these fish-feeding rays should attack a diver, but they share the curiosity of many fish, which often come up and goggle into the diver's face-glass. When a diamond-ray gets curious about the bubble-headed horizontal what-is-it down at the end of a long red snake of air-hose, a sweat of fear may well bead the diver's brow. From the sides of the ray's head project two arm-like lobes. If the curious ray should get the air-hose between those, it may break the air-line or, more probably, make off forward, dragging the line and jerking the diver off his feet. Even if the line clears, in falling forward the diver will probably knock his teeth out against the helmet metal and his mouth and nose will be in just the right position for him to drown. Similarly, the peril of getting in a whale's path is the havoc an otherwise innocuous leviathan can play with the air-line or the rope-line and so, indirectly, with the attached diver. Sharks, it is said, will not attack anything longer than themselves, and diver plus line comes into that category. "Sharks come around, but we don't bother with them," divers have told me. "Maybe squirt a bit of air to make a fizz of bubbles, which scares them off." That can be done from the air-valve of the helmet or by shoving a finger up the rubber cuff of a dress. One hardy character said, "Shark come nosin' around, you just give 'im a belt on the snout, he go 'way", and others concurred that snout-belting was the right way to get rid of sharks. Several said, "The hammerhead will have a go at you." Considering how numerous they are, sharks cannot be regarded as much of a menace to a

diver's life, but divers have been attacked and even had the dress ripped as they surfaced from a too-attentive shark.

Why more Torres Strait Islanders did not become shark-meat in the days of skin-divers is hard to explain. But I remember that Napoleon, of Murray Island, had his leg half-stripped of flesh, and a Badu Island diving boy saved his torn head by gouging the shark's eyes. Then there was the famous "Treacle" who also eye-gouged when he dived head first into a tiger shark's jaws. He wore a necklace of the marks of the shark's teeth and a great scar across his throat for the rest of his life and became an object of the greatest interest to tourists.

According to Jack Child, the longest-experienced white diver I met and the best colourful-story teller, what he was always wariest of down below was not any sea creature but a plant growth. "Sea-trees," Child said, "can be bad trouble. They're long black wavy tendrils—until you touch them. When they're touched they go rigid. You get into a bit of a forest of sea-trees going hard all round you like the bars of a cage and you can wear yourself out getting free—or maybe you won't get free."

Jack Child also talked feelingly about sea-snakes, rubbing a heel where one had bitten him.

When the diver goes down he does not descend fearfully like a Daniel going into an aqueous lion-den. His main concerns are comfortable breathing and how clear the water is for him to see the bottom for shell, which way the tide is running so that he will not have to work more than necessary against the tide, because that is exhausting, and what kind of bottom he is coming on to. He watches for the sudden shelf that is like a cliff at the bottom of the sea. He can signal up to his tender on a taut rope by hitting it with the side of his hand. The tender knows his business and how dependent the diver is on him, or the diver wouldn't have him for a tender. The tender will know whether the diver wishes the lugger to drift and when it is to anchor; he watches the weather for anything squally coming up, he knows how much a cloud across the sun will dim the diver's visibility at the depth he is working, and for how long he can probably work down there if he is on a patch of shell, maybe an hour or more at twenty fathoms, and how he should be staged coming up if he is to take proper care against getting paralysis.

More than anything else that may imperil him, the risk of paralysis is at the back of the diver's mind. The only diver I know who seemed quite easy in his mind about his chances of being paralysed is Carl Atkinson of Darwin, now on salvage diving. That is because Carl always dives by the book of pressure-tables. The book says that coming from A depth you stage for B minutes at C depth and E minutes at F depth and so on. Carl Atkinson is a cool, game, not naturally conventional character, but he always does his diving strictly according to the Hoyle of the Admiralty Tables; he thinks that for anyone who went to school to do otherwise is just damn foolish. The way a lot of the Malay and half-caste pearling divers do it gives him the shudders. In the 1948 season five divers died from diving. Four of them died from divers' paralysis. One was drowned in a leaking dress. At least two others were drowned in storms at sea.

The Japanese divers learnt about staging the hard way. Fourteen died from paralysis in one year, 1914. Divers were being pulled straight up to the surface from twenty fathoms. They began taking twenty minutes to come up from twenty fathoms, which still wouldn't suit Carl Atkinson. Sometimes divers pulled straight up would have their eyes bulging right out of the sockets and their heads so swollen that the helmet would not come off, the diver's stomach would be a big ball of wind and his legs would crumple under him when he came

on deck. What had happened was that the air's nitrogen absorbed into his bloodstream had turned into tiny bubbles of nitrogen gas, creating a paralysing interference with his blood's circulation. Nitrogen absorption is excessive under air conditions created by the necessity for sufficient pressure of air to withstand the water's pressure. The excess can be cleared from the blood only by gradual ascent. A diver brought on deck in a state of distress is put back in the water and staged again. Divers apparently dead or dying have been saved by re-staging. Another diver goes down with the staged man, adjusts the air-valve for him, and may remain with him, hanging there in the green under-sea twilight, for hour after hour. If the paralysed diver is conscious, they can talk by touching their helmets together, which conducts voice sound.

Roy Williams, a Thursday Island half-caste diver, told me how he was pulled up and when he hit the deck "everything went slack". For four days he was put down under water before sunrise and hung there in a bosun's chair until after sunset. Down there he didn't feel any pain. On the fifth day he was brought into port and put in hospital. Six weeks later he left hospital on crutches. His left leg was useless; he could move his big toe, but otherwise he had no muscular control. Roy, the biggest and strongest of the four Williams brothers, all divers, hobbled about on a stick. Old diving hands said to him, "Go back, Roy. Go down again." Finally he was persuaded. "So I go down again. And everything comes all right with my leg, and it stays all right and I'm as good today as ever I was."

The Deep-water Diving Committee of the British Admiralty figured the pressures-for-depths tables and also why paralysis occurs and how to prevent it by staging. Since then diver mortality and incapacitation have not been nearly so bad. The half-caste diver at Thursday Island and the Malay at Broome and both at Darwin are not notably educated types, except in the compassionless school of experience that puts its dunces in a corner six feet underground, or leaves them on the bottom of the sea. By educated I mean informed and given the mental formulas to apply information. Nor is it enough to understand the divers' Hoyle. Economic compulsion, as well as ignorance, breeds the impatience that cuts corners. Fortunately the new crop of divers are training at a time of high prices and of shell-beds replenished during the war years, so that big catches and depths much beyond twelve and fifteen fathoms are not economic "musts". But any change in those conditions is likely to increase the economic pressure on the diver so that he stays down too long or comes up too quickly or goes over the side when he isn't fit to dive, until one day his strained body, working out of its element, says to hell with him.

And the change seems on the way. The 1948 take of shell was 46 per cent bigger than the previous year's; but it was only 4.7 up on value. For 1949 the world's chief buyers of pearl shell, Gerdau's of New York, signed to take Australian shell at prices £140 a ton lower than the previous year. The diver would have to work harder. . . .

Pearl-shell is the shell of a large oyster, with a nacreous lining called mother-of-pearl used mainly for cutting into buttons and for ornamentation. Gold-lip or silver-lip shell is the most lustrous and there is also black-lip. A pair of average-sized shells weigh about four pounds. The last lot of shell I saw was a heap of twenty-four tons in Male and Company's shed at Broome which, at the 1948 price, was worth £12,000, or about 35,000 dollars. Coloured shell-sorters were flipping it around into ten small heaps, the ten grades. A-grade was small "chicken" shell about four and a half inches across; some shells were twice that width. Other shed-workers were packing it for shipment in wooden boxes.

Before the war a good deal of trochus-shell was fished from Thursday Island. Trochus,

or trocas, is a conical, top-shaped shell up to three inches high striped red on white with mother-of-pearl under the striping. If the buttons on your shirt have any red on the back they were cut from trochus-shell. Since the war trochusing in the Philippines and the Solomon Islands has given the market more than enough, and it has not been fished much now in Australian waters, where the same luggers can go for the high-priced pearl-shell.

Luggers at Broome in the 1948 season (April to December) were averaging about fifteen tons a boat. The diver got a "lay" of £51 for the first ton; after eleven tons his cut rose to £90 at twenty tons. They were averaging, probably, £600 a year nett. There were nineteen boats working, with nine men to a boat usually, and they would fish about three hundred tons of shell for the year, which would be well behind Thursday Island for the same year.

Pearls are strictly a by-product of the pearl-shelling industry. Not one oyster in five hundred that the diver brings up in his cord-bag is opened to reveal a pearl of any value. If the pearl-oyster shell lacked that fancy lining of nacre, only an Indian Maharaja could afford to buy a necklace of "real" pearls. The "cultured" pearl is cultivated by the same means that provide the natural pearl: by introducing an irritant speck, which the oyster proceeds to cover up with layers of nacre. Cultivated pearls have clipped down the price that natural pearls used to bring by about half. That, and the important factor that only twenty boats were working at Broome, where in 1919 the fleet was 343, explained the disappearance from Broome's hotels of the European pearl-buyer. And some of the aura departed from Broome with the going of such buyers as Leon Pack, Habib of Paris, Willie Rosenthal of Rosenthal et Frère, Zimmeroff the Rumanian, Goldenberger, Otto Blackman, and Francis Rodriquez, who paid £4000 for a pearl weighing forty grains—£100 a grain.

Few pearls of much value are being found today in Australian waters. Even the same number of shells yield fewer pearls compared with twenty years ago, Broome old-timers swear. And Western Australian waters always yielded most; Thursday Island was never a great producer of pearls. Some of the best were found well down the coast from Broome. In Shark Bay a smaller type of shell used to be worth fishing for pearls only. The old-timers can't explain it at all.

A good pearl, symmetrical and unblemished, will still bring enough to pay the diver, who gets the major percentage of the price, a very pretty bonus. The shape of its beauty may be called round, pear, bell, drop or button. Its hue may be pure (white), rosae (pink-tinted) or straw (gold). Black pearls come from the Gulf of Mexico and some parts of the Pacific, not from Australian waters. Pearl growth joined to the shell is called blister or baroque, which pearlers always pronounce barrack. For some reason they call pearls "stones".

The finest recorded Australian pearl was the Star of the West, found off Broome in 1917. It weighed 100 grains, and was valued at £14,000. More renowned, perhaps, is the Southern Cross, formed of nine separate pearls in cross shape—the kind of compound curiosity that so fascinates Mr Ripley and his public. The best Thursday Island pearl that Jack Dunwoodie had ever seen was a high-button of eighty-one grains that would have made a brooch or ring, and was worth £1200. When a pearl is brought in nobody rings a bell on the jetty. Probably half the pearls go quietly to a snide buyer and find their way to market in Asia without the tax-gatherers, or even the pearler, being any the wiser.

The pearl-cleaner works with a three-cornered file-knife, its corners razor-sharp. He removes blemished skins of nacre until he thinks the gem is at its best, bearing in mind that, with each skin, he is peeling off the weight of a grain or so. But skinning may find a fine

lustre underneath or may peel away the depth of a blemish. It is a risky and delicate craft, skinning pearls.

Sam Sue, the old Chinese pearl-cleaner at Broome, shook his head over how long it was since he had cleaned a really good pearl. I wondered what he would do with the tobacco-tin of small misshapen seed pearls he had. Sam told me. If he got a stomach-ache he would crush a few into a powder and swallow it like an aspirin headache-powder. He said that pearl-powder was highly esteemed in China as colic medicine and for fevers.

One Broome diver is Chinese, but the number of Chinese at Broome never approximated the number of Japanese, as you can see from the sizes of their respective sections of the cemetery. The Jap section, with many fine-looking tombstones of seashore sandstone, not square-edged but put up in the natural shape, is much larger than the Chinese and Mohammedan sections combined. Darwin had a much larger Chinatown.

• Darwin waters are not so productive of shell, but the pearler is encouraged to operate some part of his fleet from Darwin because primary industries are tax-free in the Northern Territory. In 1948 the take was only about fifty tons of shell, with ten luggers working, eight of them owned by Male and Company of Broome and the Darwin Pearling Company, a subsidiary of Bowden's, Thursday Island.

An Australian invention is the pearl-box. Pat Percy, a Broome pearler, patented it in 1910. Rather like a charity collecting-box, the pearl-box goes out with the lugger and the pearls, if any, dropped into it stay safely inside until the box lock is opened with the pearler's key. Nobody can play kiddies' money-box with it, because the pearls drop down a pipe with a valve-like end. If the box is tipped up the exit closes. Pat Percy was the kind of old-time pearler who took his wife along on his lugger and, ashore, was a regular player in a high-stakes poker school known as the Broome Stock Exchange.

Broome in its high heyday had some terrific characters. Black Jack Macdonald, flew the skull-and-crossbones at his lugger's masthead. Gentleman Jimmy James, an aristocratic-mannered English scion, once had a spectacular row with Dutch authorities at Koepang, Timor, where he had gone to get crew. He launched a few blazing oil barrels into Koepang Creek on the in-running tide, and before he sailed off for Broome took pot-shots at the town. On the way home he thoughtfully emptied the magazine of his rifle through the sails of his lugger. Subsequent Dutch protests were met with an outraged, "Look what they did to me!" Gentleman James liked to drink champagne, out of sixteen-ounce pots.

Less gaudy were pearlmen like Captain Thomas Hughes-Owen. Still at Broome is Tudor Hughes-Owen who, as a lad, rode out the 1908 hurricane lashed to the mast, his mother lashed beside him. Twice wrecked in the hurricanes that sweep these seas was Bernard Bardwell, who once shared with his brother a £4000 pearl, but had the bad luck to lose his boats in the willy-willy hurricanes. Bardwell's solace today is his hobby, sea-shells, and he has built up at Broome a collection that is known to conchologists all over the world.

When Bernard Bardwell came to Broome in 1903, he told me, the pearling fleet comprised three hundred vessels. Shell was £95 a ton. The old-time pearler was not above regarding himself as a fisherman. He went out with his luggers and provisioned them from a mother-ship. As the industry developed on company-commerce lines, it came more and more into the hands of shore-bound managers. "Veranda pearlmen" the old hands scornfully called the non-sea-going type. Broome had its market ups and downs, and its population grew to 4000 in 1917, when the season's catch was a record 1600 tons. It was colourful with

the Japanese Feast of Lanterns, the "Malay Christmas" and the Chinese New Year. In 1920 it was bloody with a race riot between the Japanese and the Koepangers.

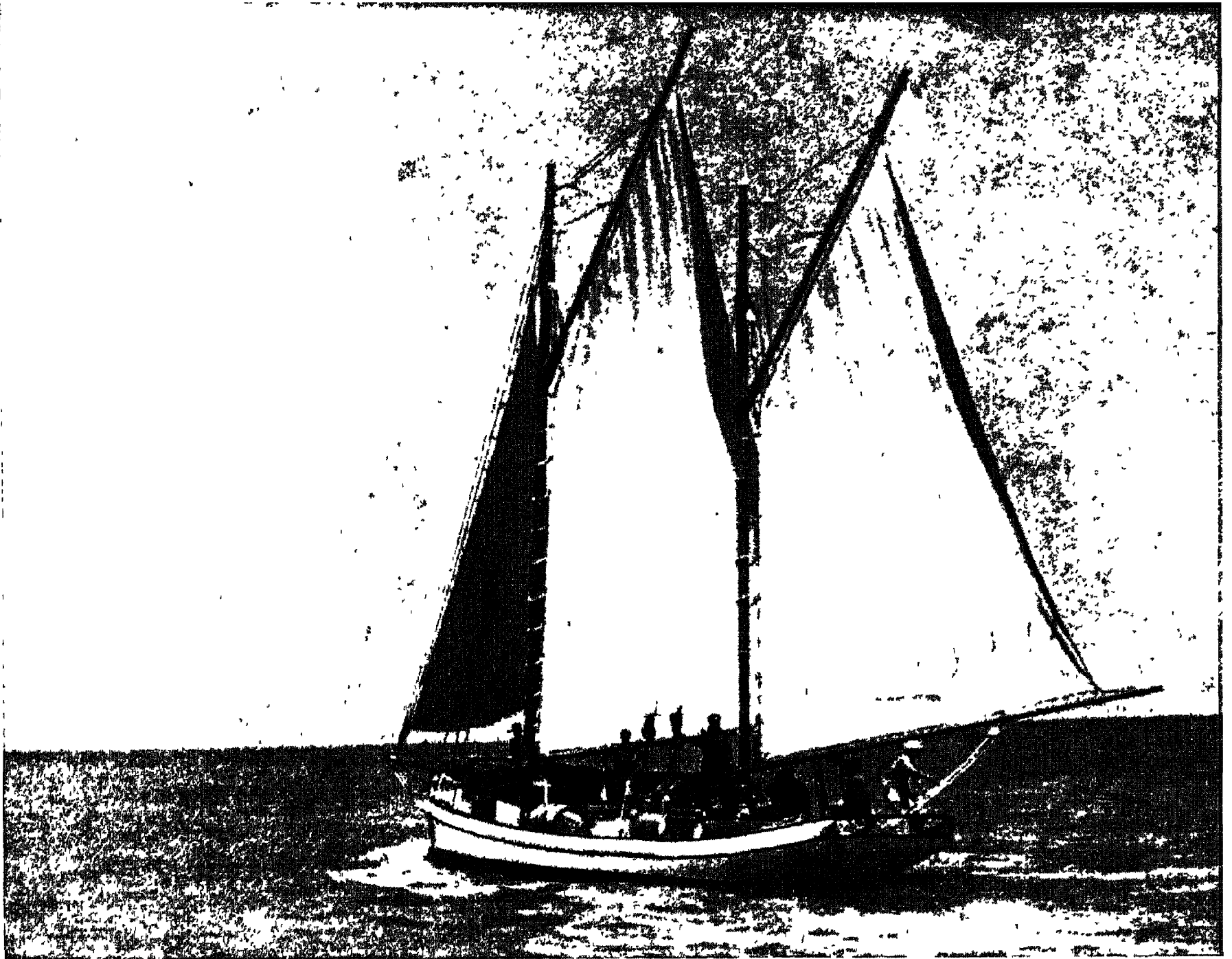
Today Broome is tamer, a three-hotel town with about 1500 people, less than half of them white.

Broome's pearling aura and the white-brown racial mixture keep some of its old spell tangible. The town itself is spread along a thin mile of the shore of mangrove-edged Roebuck Bay. The *Roebuck* was the discovery ship of William Dampier, the English buccaneer who turned respectable navigator in 1699. The pearling luggers lie up in Dampier Creek at the town's south end. Broome is strictly a two-ended town. The "European" end has bungalows with low-pitched roofs and wide verandas. The Asiatic end is also the main business quarter. Most structures are built from corrugated iron and, from roof to ground, they are painted white. The sandy soil is ochre-red as you get back of the town and towards Cable Beach around the point from Roebuck Bay. The sea, from shore level, is brilliantly blue. But look again in a few hours and there is no sea. Tide-fall is twenty-six feet at its lowest ebb and the water recedes a clear half-mile beyond the end of the half-mile-long jetty, where the occasional big ship just sits on the mud until the tide returns at a visible pace up the bay.

Nearly all Broome's divers are Malays, using Malay as the ethnic term which can include Timorese (who if they come from Koepang are called Koepangers) and some Indonesians from Ambon, with a few Filipinos, who used to be called Manilamen. Asiatics are allowed into Australia only by permit and on sufferance, except a few who came in before the Immigration Act provisions of 1901, old hands called "local men". Malays are allowed in only if they work on boats of the pearling industry. No Malay women can accompany them, which points up the question: With whom does the Malay diver co-habit? Broome's segment of coloured female population is only part of the answer. Malay divers are marrying white. A brown husband whose income may average £15 a week can be a good provider. He will also be away for more than half the year, which is not without its compensations. Some of the girls who find the Malays good, if suspicious, husbands are English; they came to Australia as brides-to-be of Australian soldiers they met in England.

Any day between November and April, but usually in the early months of the year, a small cloud low down on the horizon may grow and grow until the whole sky is a black arch. Far out a grey backdrop of rain falls on a dead calm sea. The black sky cracks into lightning. The wind comes, cold off the rain, and Broome puts up its shutters against the onrush of a "cock-eyed bob".

Worse than the "cock-eyed bob" is the willy-willy, Australia's most devastating form of hurricane. Two big blows in April and December made 1908 the blackest year. Each hurricane caught the fleet out fishing and each drowned about fifty men. Two years later another furious willy-willy overwhelmed twenty-six luggers and cost forty lives, which go in the reckoning (less usual discount for lives that belonged to Asiatics) when you try to compute the real price of pearl-shell and the buttons on your shirt.



PEARLS—The lugger puts out into the Arafura Sea with its Malay crew, bound for some of the finest pearling beds.



The diver is the key man in the pearling industry. The Japanese divers of pre-war days have been replaced by Koepangers and Malays.



The tender is of vital importance to the diver's safety. Pulling him up is a delicate operation, for it must be done slowly, allowing him time to adapt himself to different pressures.

OUTBACK POLICE—Unlike his city colleagues, the policeman outback is little occupied with crime and petty sessions, never with traffic. But the district he patrols may be as large as Denmark or Ireland. The Northern Territory police trooper travels sometimes by camel, sometimes with pack-horses, or if the few roads and tracks permit, by utility truck. With him go his black trackers, full-blooded aborigines employed as interpreters, scouts, and horse- or camel-boys.

These boys have been trained by their own people from early childhood to follow the tracks of animals over sandy country and stony plains, and even over hard rock. Their skill and rare powers of observation enable them to track a wanted man with the sureness of a bloodhound.

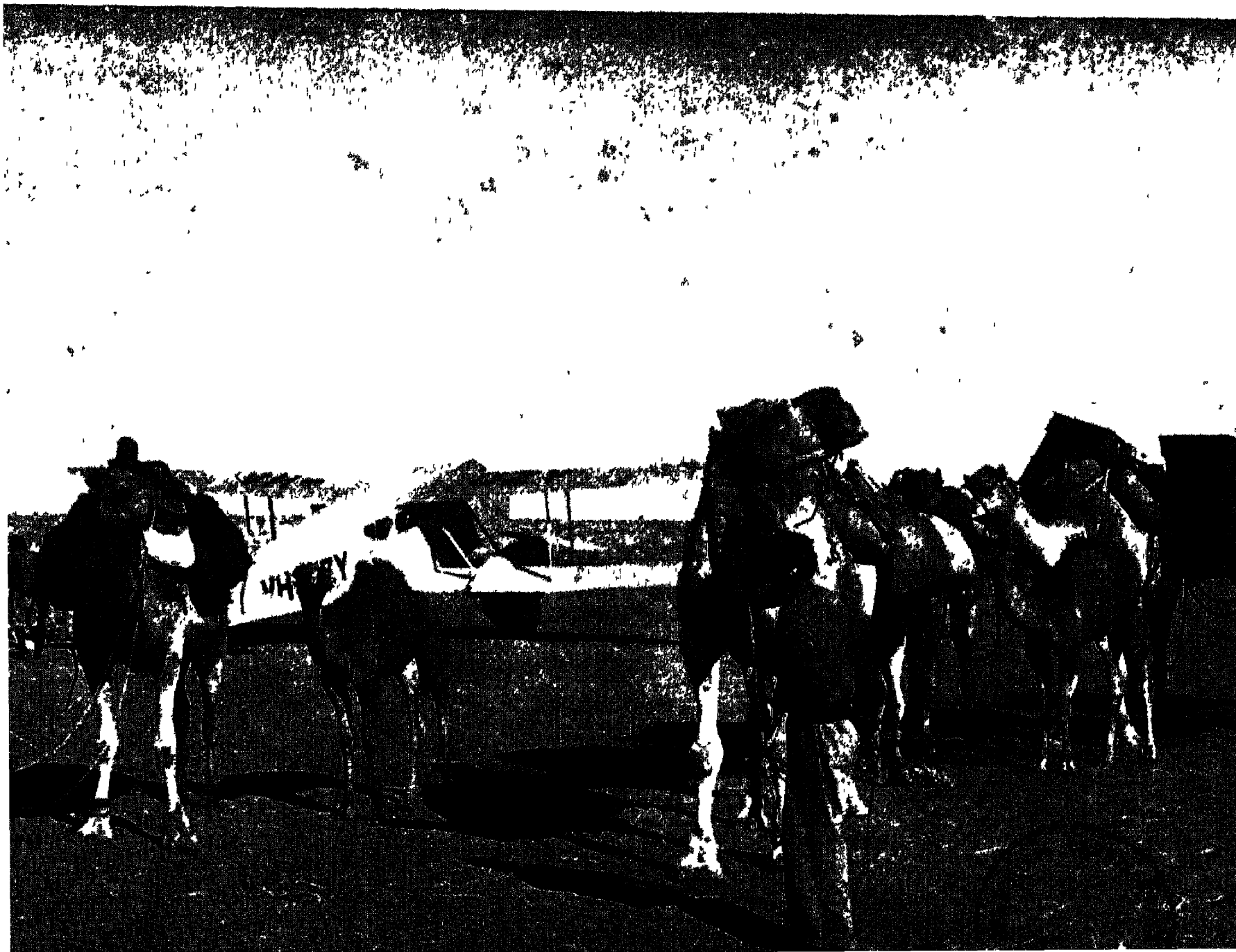
The white trooper must also be a man of wide experience: bushman, horseman, counsellor to many lonely settlers,

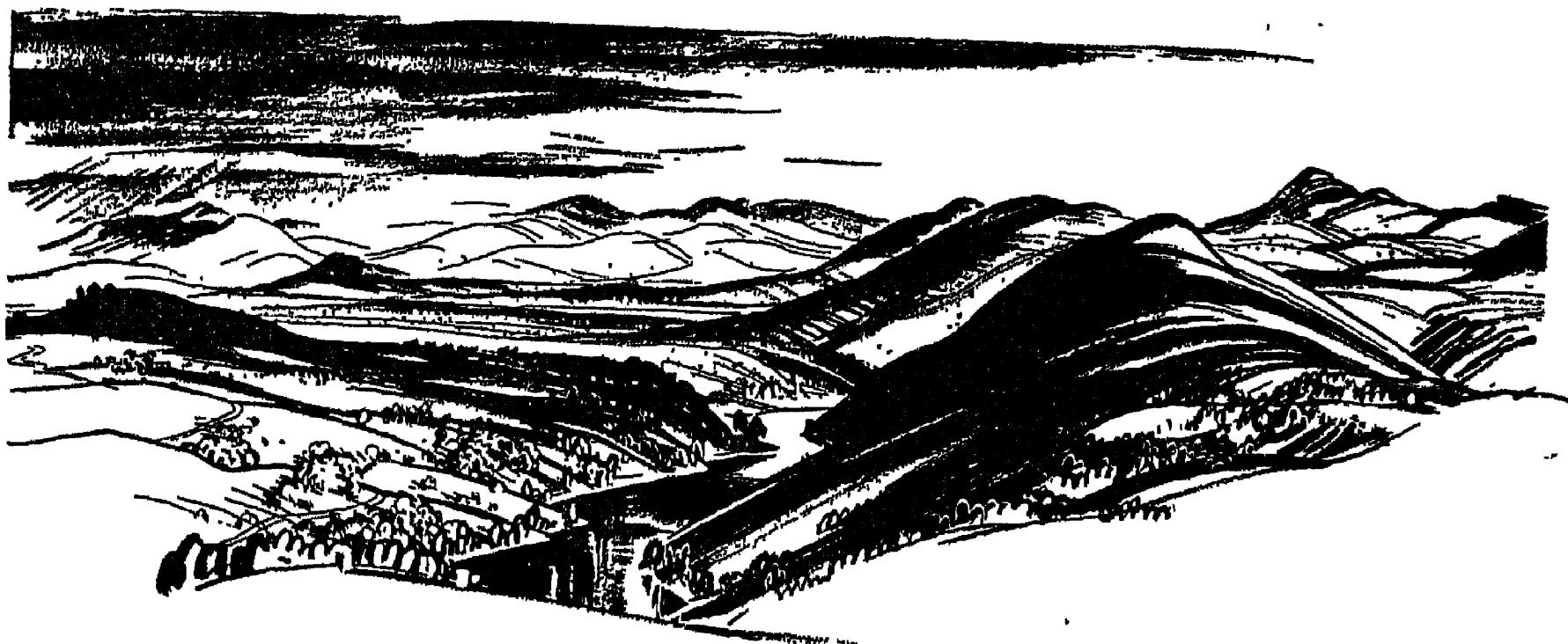
protector of aborigines, stock inspector, registrar of births, marriages, and deaths. At times it becomes his responsibility to marry young couples and to read the burial service over the dead.

Now that civilization is pushing out into the Centre, it is not uncommon to see camels and aeroplanes side by side upon a remote cattle station, many of which nowadays have airstrips for the flying doctor or the local mail run. But desert, jungle, and long waterless stretches still oblige the trooper on patrol to rely upon ancient and well-tried modes of transport.

Tennant Creek, a mining town, has the full flavour of the Wild West, with its stockmen in ten-gallon hats and high-heeled boots. In the first days of the gold boom, fifteen years ago, men were reputedly quick on the trigger, but even the Never-Never is becoming civilized now.

Camels loaded for a desert patrol. This is one of the mail planes flown by Connellan Airways.





THE SNOW COUNTRY

by Elyne Mitchell

A WINTER traveller, flying north over the south-eastern corner of Australia, will see the Alps like charmed white islands rising out of a green and brown sea. First, in Victoria, there are the atolls of Buller and Buffalo, then the larger islands—Bogong and the Bogong High Plains, with Hotham and Feathertop very close, and the Dargo High Plains lying just behind. Last, and most northerly, is the long white Kosciusko Plateau, almost unbroken snow stretching from the Murray River to the Federal Capital. They are mountains possessing all the mystery of remote, sea-girt islands, but with their own inherent magic. Theirs are height and the solitude of snow; contact with the clouds, and a seeming close communion with the stars. Theirs, being the source of great rivers, are the echoes of the words of creation. But the traveller in the plane, unless his feet have trodden mountains, may feel the fascination yet know none of these things of which the magic is composed.

The side of the Kosciusko mountains that one sees from the plane when flying on the beam, is the western side, the steep western face that rises above the Upper Murray Valley. Here there are great cliffs and canyons, waterfalls in steep gullies, and swift falling spurs that drop five and six thousand feet to the Geehi flats below. On the eastern side of the plateau the hills of the Monaro are just rounded hills massed one above another till they roll onwards and upwards above the winter snowline and culminate in Kosciusko's domed summit. Only on the west of the Main Range does one see them in their glory as great rugged mountains.

It is this Western Face—at which many skiers, approaching the mountains, as they must, from the eastern side, have never even looked—that is a perpetual beacon to us in the Upper Murray. And it is down these steep spurs and gullies that we have had the best skiing that Australia's Alps can offer, skiing which ranks with the good skiing of the world.

One can stand on the top of Mount Townsend, 7238 feet, only sixty-seven feet lower

than Kosciusko which lies behind, look down on the Geehi, 6000 feet below, and point one's skis down any one of many different routes. There are bumps and ridges on which it is lovely to swing one's turns, with skis almost airborne, till it seems that the next stop might be the lonely river flats.

One may slide down the western face of Carruther's Peaks and turn into a long narrow gully that is known as Little Austria, and then, thrillingly enclosed by high crags, throw banked turns on the steep snow walls, down and down the gully till it opens out in the Northcote Canyon. There is Twynam West Spur, a narrow ridge with Watson's Crags dropping sheer off its sides, rocks glittering with ice and snow, falling in splendour to the bottomless drops. But off the north flank of that spur, too, between a great rock chute and the lovely snow flutings of Twynam, there are several open snow faces, smooth and tremendously steep, that draw one down and down in long fast swings, dancing in air, and snow, and sunlight. Off Mount Anderson one may ski swiftly down a spur, like a giant staircase of precipitous steps, that leads to Friar's Alp, a small bright circle of snow with a tonsure of mountain ash.

These western slopes are steep and wonderful skiing, but they have something, which either repels or attracts, not possessed by the more developed ski countries of the world. Each swoop and dive, as one skis down these spurs and gullies and great snow faces, takes one towards wild, little-known country, a country without mountain lodges, or chalets, or people—only the bush, the wombats, the possums, and the dingoes. And perhaps there is no bushland and forest country in the world that has the same feeling of eternal time that is intrinsic to the Australian bush. White men have come with their cattle and sheep and their ruinous fires, but still it seems that on the face of Australia is written: "That which hath been is now." It is the remoteness from all but the infinite bush that, to me, gives profound value to the days of skiing down those tremendous slopes, just as it gives value to the lonely, starlit camps in the forest or on the edge of the snow.

In recent winters, other wonderful slopes on the Kosciusko Plateau have been discovered by tourers who were kept off the Main Range by bad weather. These slopes lie east of the Chalet and run down into the Crackenback River. Somehow it had always been thought that snow never lay far down on that side, and, though stockmen and fishermen went there in summer, since the days of Wragge's Observatory on the summit of Kosciusko, when the men used to go to and from Jindabyne along the Crackenback, no one had thought of skiing there.

Now it is known that still uncounted magnificent slopes are in that valley. Some of them start with a curl-over drop out of a flat valley, and a steep open face narrowing between ridges till, after perhaps seven hundred feet, it runs into a timbered gully. Some start with a long, gentle run and then suddenly turn downwards at a wonderful angle. Ridges, and wide open funnels; unbroken snow, and woodrunning; everything is there to choose from, and often there is lovely, sparkling powder snow to froth around the skis. These spurs and funnels are very like the slopes of the Victorian Alps, though in most cases much longer. The Crackenback Valley is a constant reminder of Mount Hotham.

Wombats play in the snow lower down where the creeks are open, and their tracks criss-cross the shining spurs. There are snowgum thickets where the long boughs are bent by snow and woven into lovely white arches over the dark-moving streams, and where stumps have been turned into snow-clad gnomes. Mountain ash stand in grandeur framing views of the beautiful open snow faces.

The Crackenback River runs between mountain ranges, and one looks across at heavily wooded hillsides, patched with snow. There are occasional glimpses of the glittering water in amongst the trees below. It is sheltered from the wind and, for this reason, and because it is closer to the Chalet than the Main Range, it will probably become the main skiing ground; and it is superb skiing. It is only less exciting than the Western Face, because it is not in the really high mountains, perhaps not quite as steep, and the world does not drop 6000 feet beneath one's ski-tips down to the solitude of Geehi; nor is there the uninterrupted view beyond, stretching, as far as vision allows, over the rich Murray Valley. The Western Face is the only skiing in Australia that really is high mountain skiing—and it has the attendant disadvantage of being inaccessible in bad weather.

Exploring trips on the Western Face and wanderings on foot over little-known mountain ways, and—perhaps strangely enough—the exciting effort of driving jeeps over “the tops” from Khancoban to Charlotte's Pass, have always seemed to be linked to the earlier tradition of one hundred years ago when men sought new country beyond the mountains and found the Upper Murray; when they explored routes between the Murray and Monaro, and found their way over to the Tumut Valley or Gippsland.

There was a second tradition woven around the mountains, and one can feel its power if one rides with the mobs of cattle or spends a night at a mountain hut during the time of the autumn muster—the tradition of hard-riding stockmen mustering cattle in the rough timbered gullies or out on the rolling snowgrass “tops”, galloping after the brumby horses.

Throughout the snowlease season these few stockmen ride round their cattle and their sheep. Sometimes they camp in tents, but mostly live in the rough cattlemen's huts. Their life has not much changed in the ninety or one hundred years since stock was first grazed in the mountains. Except for occasional visits to their home districts, Cooma, Jindabyne, Adaminaby or Tumut, Corryong or Tooma, each day is spent riding over the mountains, through the long snowgrass lanes, over granite rock ridges, driving the cattle back to their own country if they have strayed to another lease, or shepherding the sheep and sometimes folding them at night, away from the dingoes.

Even in summer there will be blizzards, dense mist, and snow; and in the autumn heavy falls may catch them before all the cattle are mustered and taken out. There are old legends of cattle being fenced in by snow walls built up around the area which they have trampled down, and of men, on their old toe-strap skis, “snowshoe-ing them out” by stamping down a track over which the cattle could be walked. There is one Monaro family of which it is always said that they will never bring their cattle out of the mountains and down to the Corryong sale till they have to travel them belly-deep through the snow.

From end to end of the mountains one sees cattle or sheep during the summer. At Groggin, on the Indi River below the southern end of the plateau, there is quite a large out-station with several huts and store sheds, yards and paddocks, and a little orchard. One of the main routes on to “the tops” goes from there, up the Leatherbarrel Spur and Little Mick, to Dead Horse Gap. Another route lies a mile or so farther south, up into the Cascades, named for a huge waterfall that roars down into the Indi. This great wide valley is in the centre of the brumby country and it is known that the brumbies often winter there if the snow is not too thick. Four of us once skied to the Cascades from the Chalet, and succeeded in getting close enough to a brumby to lasso it.

In summer I have seen the cattle salted in the centre of the valley, red and white beasts coming pouring down from the surrounding hills.

All along the main tops the cattle, most usually Herefords, are dotted about, grazing between fields of snow daisies at the head of Windy Creek, not far from Dicky Cooper's Bogong; peacefully sheltering from a cold wind in the unexpected basin between the two summits of the Ghost; spread out over the Bogong Swamp, below Jagungal, their coats sheened by the early morning light; peering out of the snowgums on the little plain between the Dargal peaks. Last summer, when driving the jeeps along the Range, we frequently saw mobs of sheep camped on dusty drifts of snow.

Over the century probably thousands of sheep have been saved from drought, on the mountain pastures, and many wonderful cattle have been brought out of the hills for fattening on the river flats, but the other side of the picture is not so good. It shows the mountain country, where the great rivers head, burnt year after year, becoming ever dryer and less absorbent, with the forest floor bare of covering, so that the rain and the melting snow waters pour off, washing soil down into the creeks, to form the silt that is filling the rivers and eventually will fill the weirs. And it shows the huge bogs that once retained the water and controlled the even flow of the streams, becoming always smaller and firmer from the trampling of the cattle and the sheep's small hooves, and the eating of the bog mosses.

These mountains and their snow—the whole alpine system, all the charmed white islands and many others—are immensely important to Australia, but one must know the hills, or some of the world's high mountains, to understand that to many people they have an importance of a different category, a value that is in their outlines against the sky, or in the intimate contact of skis with their steep slopes; a value that is in the freezing immersion in a mountain pool, close to the source of a stream.

On the map the rivers and creeks are drawn, the waterfalls are marked, the mountain names are printed; weirs, dams, and the hydro-electric stations are shown. Lower down the rivers are the names of the irrigation districts. Not much imagination should be required to understand the relationship of the mountains and the snow with the land and the people it supports, and with the creative impulse of these people.

But there is nothing on the map to tell of a grove of snow-gums where a warm night wind once blew the campfire sparks among the branches; where, later, the white boughs danced an intricate movement in the moonlight, and unremembered, ancient things stirred in the blood. Nothing says that there is a deep pool below the waterfalls, where a swimmer may suddenly become one with the pulse and rhythm of the river. Where Nurenmerenmang is written on the map, anyone who had not been there would never guess that there is a little square of black, peaty soil which in summer bears a mass of minute pink and white daisies, nor does the map give any warning that the track passes through a hollow where the black sallees make a haunted forest, the dark trees hung with pale green, furry fungus—a silent, sinister hollow, where the light is dim and no wind stirs. But a map drawn in with memories and experiences would be a rich, strange thing.

Even if one flies over the mountains, the immense relief map laid out below is strangely bereft of its vitality. Possibly this is because the well-known and unknown are blended into the one field of vision. So much is seen at once that, when looking into such a familiar place as Pretty Plain, other valleys of whose existence one did not know make the country look different, and they have nothing to do with the memories that centre round Pretty Plain, which itself has shrunk in size and importance. Possibly it is just because the physical touch with earth and snow is lacking that the immense relief map seems unreal. There is not the

intense use of all perceptions, only that of sight, and immediately the flight is over all one has seen seems like a dream—and as difficult to remember as a dream in the morning.

From a plane, Geehi is three pocket-handkerchief green flats, and the crags of the Western Face are right beside the wings, while the Geehi Wall, steep and wooded, through which the Swampy Plains or Geehi River flows, loses most of its isolating force because the river, the Khancoban Valley, and the Murray Valley are visible beyond. Had one never camped in Geehi, in autumn, winter, spring, and summer, one would hardly know what a secret place it is, the outside world walled off by mountains and only the river threading through the Devil's Grip to join the Murray not many miles away. Nor would one understand the remoteness of the plane if there was no memory of sitting by red glowing coals in front of a tent while the moon sailed through encircling clouds, and the sound of a plane came and went as it flew over Geehi from the clouds into the clear sky.

It is startling to see, when one flies up over Geehi and the Main Range, how narrow the belt of snowland is between the Swampy Plains River, on the west, and the Crackenback or Thredbo, on the east—most startling when there are memories of a long battle back to the Chalet with a cross wind buffetting, or of a crazy evening, racing the darkness down the slopes of Twynam, crossing the Snowy, climbing wearily up the back of Charlotte's Pass, and then skiing down through the gloom towards the Chalet's lights below.

The highest mountains are here, in this narrow strip, and the head of the Snowy River. Here, too, lie the mountain lakes, Cootapatamba, in the open valley below Mount Kosciusko, with silver-leaved daisies covering its banks; the lovely Lake Albina, in the head of the Northcote Canyon, and the Blue Lake and Hedley Tarn below Mount Twynam. In summer the mountain side above Lake Albina is a garden of alpine flowers. In winter snow lies thick on the lake, or sometimes the lower end may be open, and the water dancing under a thin sheet of ice. The Blue Lake is half-encircled by rocky crags. Ice coats these rocks, and they glitter blue and silver when the round lake is a white carpeted dancing floor. Underneath the snow and frozen surface, the water is seventy feet deep.

Below the Blue Lake and Hedley Tarn there is an ancient glacial moraine. Great rocks are tumbled in a vast profusion which would never be suspected under winter's snow. This moraine we know intimately because four of us, in a mist dark almost as night, drove two jeeps through and over it till we crossed the outlet of Hedley Tarn, found we could go no farther, and doubted if we could ever get back. Our winter knowledge of the mountains had proved insufficient, but we had seen something which we would never forget, mist boiling up off the water of Hedley Tarn which shone blue suddenly in a shaft of sunlight; and mist wreathing round the immense, tumbling, primeval rocks.

In that strip of mountain country—so narrow from the air—we have expended much energy, with gay laughter or enduring effort; and there we have seen much beauty, the hoary frosts of heaven and the treasures of the snow.

It seems that it is within the physical contact with the hills that the way lies to the knowledge of their spiritual value—in the touch of the snow, the rocks, and the earth; the smell of some crushed leaves, the sound of the wind; the sharp tingle and bite of the water, its thundering rhythm in one's ears and against one's flesh, or its pulse-beat below the ice in a frozen stream. In all these things and many, many more, here, there, and everywhere, lies the intangible value of the charmed white islands floating in the air.

Glen Innes, like most country towns, offers nearly all the amenities and facilities of the larger cities. Living is cheaper and rentals lower than in metropolitan suburbs. Though there are not the theatres and other places of amusement, there are compensatory benefits. Dances in the Town Hall may lack the glamour of the city night-clubs, but there is jollity in the barn dance, and solid satisfaction in the supper prepared by the ladies and served in a series of "sittings" on the stage. Floor shows arranged by local ballet or dance groups are usually a feature of annual balls. And where in the city would you find the interest there is in the presentation of debts when everyone in the hall knows each of the young ladies presented to the Mayor or the Bishop, and knows her parents, brothers and sisters, her uncles, cousins and aunts, her escort and all the members of his family too? Where but in a country town can you get the real enjoyment of amateur productions, when everyone in the hall knows everyone on the stage?

There are 1200 homes in Glen Innes. More than half are owned, or being bought by, those living in them. All but a very few homes have electricity and water services from the town supply. More than half are sewered, and more than a third connected to the town gas service.

As in most other Australian country towns, the great majority of the homes are of timber-frame and weatherboard construction, with corrugated-iron or tile roofs. There is a fair sprinkling of brick homes in the residential sections, and in the main business blocks all buildings are of brick or concrete construction. Glen Innes has its own privately owned brick kilns.

The pioneers of the town planned wisely, and succeeding generations followed their example. As a result Glen Innes today has 170 acres of parklands within the town area. In addition there are ten acres of playing fields, all municipally controlled, and about eleven miles of tree-lined streets. A Citizens' Parks Improvement Committee advises the Municipal Council.

The people of Glen Innes have a much greater and closer say in the conduct of their local affairs than is possible to the city or suburban community. Every three years they elect their Municipal Council of eight members. The Council each year elects one of its members Mayor. Within State law the Municipal Council has full control of local government.

Council meetings, held fortnightly, are open to the public, the council meeting in committee in the alternative weeks to deal with administrative matters of town services.

The 1949 Municipal Council elected farmer Gerry Digby Mayor for his sixth term of office. Alderman Digby has been prominent in town and district organizations for many years. A veteran of the first world war, he was for ten years president of the local sub-branch of the Returned Servicemen's League, of which he is the oldest resident member. On his property, "Rosecroft", four miles from town Gerry Digby breeds fat lambs from Corriedale cross ewes, crops 120 acres to maize and fifty to oats, with good stands of lucerne and improved pastures, fattening cattle in the summer. Other members of the Council are two of the town's three medical men, a solicitor, a painter and decorator, an officer of the State Agriculture Department, and two local storekeepers.

Glen Innes is the headquarters also of the Severn Shire Council, which administers the local government of the wide country district supporting the town. It is responsible for building and maintaining roads and bridges, and it controls building, lighting, health and sanitary services in the many small townships and settlements in its area. Shire Councillors

are farmers or business men representing ridings, or areas in which they live. They have an intimate knowledge of the countryman's problems, are elected by adult franchise for periods of three years.

The President of Severn Shire for 1949 is Councillor William H. Wilson, who was first elected to the Council in 1919, and who has been a leader in most local movements for town and district advancement. A prominent member of the Clydesdale Breeders' Association, he has been breeding draught-horses since 1912, and is a well-known judge. Bill Wilson started farming with 98 acres rented, and built it into a show place of 1040 acres freehold at Furracabad, near Glen Innes, which he sold recently to live in retirement.

The landholders of the district elect the members of the Pastures Protection Board, which meets monthly in Glen Innes to deal with matters affecting the interests of pastoralists. The board controls stock routes and reserves in the district, deals with methods of pest eradication, and in general protects and advances the grazing interests.

District residents who are members of the Hospitals Benefits Association elect the local members of the Board of Directors of the District Hospital, and on a similar basis contributors elect the committee that conducts the affairs of the Glen Innes District Ambulance Service. The ambulance, with two-way radio between headquarters and cars, is supported through a contribution system and by locally organized entertainments. There are plans for erection of a new and larger hospital and improved nurses' quarters. Glen Innes has a Baby Health Centre, where mothers and babies can receive advice and guidance. The health clinic sisters are paid by the State, and the local branch of the Country Women's Association and Younger Set maintain the centre at the Mountain Home provided by the C.W.A. for the benefit of women from less-favoured areas who need rest and recuperation in the highlands.

Co-operation plays its part in business life as well as in the administration of civic control and services.

The oldest co-operative concern in the town is the Dairy Society. District farmers supplying cream and pigs to the factory are all shareholders. There are about 100 suppliers of cream and 150 of pigs. In an average year the factory turns out about 300,000 pounds of butter and about 230,000 pounds of ham and bacon. The factory products have taken prizes at many agricultural shows. Most of the products are used in Australia, but some are for export, mostly to Britain. All equipment in the factory is electrically driven.

Recent developments in the field of co-operation are the establishment of a farm machinery pool, which has sixty farmer shareholders who get priority on allotment of machinery on a requirement basis, and a Rural Co-operative Society that handles most farm and homestead needs on a minimum profit basis, and arranges marketing of perishable crops.

Glen Innes draws most of its strength from the rich farming district surrounding it. District life is thus closely integrated with town activities. The town is a direct market for much of the district's produce, and the rail centre from which the surplus is sent to city markets or oversea ports. The district produces wool, mutton, fat lambs, maize, oats and other cereals, beef and dairy cattle, fresh and canning vegetables and potatoes. Many farmers began as share croppers, and today own rich properties. Farmers, graziers and townspeople combine to form the Pastoral and Agricultural Association, which organizes the annual three-days' show that mirrors the district's productivity. "The Show", usually held in February or March, is the big event of the year for both townspeople and country residents.

A few miles out of town is the 1100 acres New England Experiment Farm, where State Agriculture Department officers conduct research into stock diseases, soil deficiencies, crop rotations and other matters of vital interest to farmers. Local graziers, dairymen, cattle-breeders, orchardists and farmers are members of an advisory committee. Advice from the farm experts is readily available to farmers, many of whom make areas on their properties available for local crop experiments.

Town and country people meet and combine to conduct the Glen Innes Jockey Club and the Picnic Race Club. There are several Jockey Club race meetings each year, and the annual Picnic race meeting and ball is a great social event. In addition, unregistered meetings on the local course aid charitable causes.

Every possible interest for men and women, young and old, is catered for in the many town organizations. These include the Country Women's Association and Younger Set, the Red Cross, the Benevolent Society (maintaining homes for aged people), the Hospital Women's Auxiliary, the Rotary Club, the Apex Club, the Musical and Dramatic Society, the Eisteddfod Society (conducting annual competitions), a branch of the Council for Encouragement of Music and the Arts, the Citizens' Baths Committee, the Rod Fisherman's and Trout Acclimatization Society (stocking and protecting district streams), the Chamber of Commerce, the National Council of Women, and the Far West Children's Health Scheme.

There is a close link between the everyday life of the townspeople and their churches. Church youth organizations and sporting, dramatic and social clubs attract the young folk and foster the community spirit that is the basis of happy country town life. In addition there are strong Boy Scout and Girl Guide contingents, and a well-supported Boys' Club. Glen Innes has branches of the leading ex-servicemen's organizations, with strong women's auxiliaries. Many ex-servicemen are members of the local Rifle Club. The School of Arts is a meeting place, where members may indulge in games of cards, dominoes or billiards. A well-stocked library and reading room are available, and many town associations make use of the meeting rooms. Glen Innes and district children are well catered for educationally. The State provides two well-equipped infants' schools, two primary schools for children up to fifteen years of age, and a High School that brings the students to University entrance standard. There is also a Roman Catholic school with classes from kindergarten to matriculation.

Scots were among the earliest settlers in the Glen Innes district, and many have migrated there since, so that there is a strong Scottish community. Homeland names are perpetuated in settlements at Ben Lomond, Glencoe, Dundee and others. The Glen Innes Caledonian Society has a large membership and keeps alive the customs and traditions of the country north of the Tweed. The Glen Innes Pipe Band, depleted in numbers since the war, gives its services to aid processions, carnivals and charitable causes, in association with the Municipal Brass Band. Each year the Caledonian Society and the Pipe Band stage a Caledonian sports meeting, with contests in piping and dancing, tossing the caber and other traditional events. Members participate, often with honour, in similar contests in neighbouring centres.

Glen Innes is known as a "solid" town. It has that quality of continuing progress built on pioneering enterprise that is a feature common to many Australian towns. The father and son tradition is strong. Family names have been prominent in town activities over the century, and there are the distinctions, known only to townsfolk, between "old Bob" and "young Bob", "old Duncan" and "young Duncan". Sons follow fathers and grandfathers

in businesses and callings. There's Whyte's boot factory, for instance. Billy Whyte and his brothers, Sam and Jack, now controlling the various sections of the business, are sons of the founder, and grandsons are in responsible positions with the firm.

Though mechanical methods have supplanted the horse in much of the work on farms, there is still work for the blacksmith and the saddler. Bill Mann carries on the work at the smithy his father started in 1892 when horses drew the stage-coaches over the New England ranges. The Dibley brothers, Bill and Roger, still build the Dibley saddles made famous all over Australia in the business their father started over sixty years ago.

Archie Gray went to work for the *Glen Innes Examiner* when he left school nearly thirty years ago, and is a fast and efficient linotype operator. His son Jim follows tradition, operating an automatic platen in the job-printing department. Maurice Ryall, printer of the *Examiner*, has been with the paper for over twenty-nine years. His son Jim was with him, apprenticed to the trade, before the war. Jim, a corporal with the A.I.F., was killed in the fighting on Kokoda.

The men of Glen Innes have played their part in three wars. Near the post-office, at the intersection of Grey and Meade streets, is a memorial to those who fell in the Boer War, and some veteran survivors still gather on commemoration days. Memorial Gates at Anzac Park bear the names of 810 men of the district who enlisted and served, of whom 120 were killed. In the second world war 1500 enlisted, of whom sixty were killed.

A live town, with its roots in the pioneering past, and its eyes on the developing future of a growing country, Glen Innes typifies the "home town" that has a grip on the affections of three million Australians. It is the town the exile dreams of, and comes home to.



SEVEN CITIZENS

by Nigel Palethorpe

THERE is a world of difference between the Average Australian, a poor statistical creature without feeling or opinion, and the Typical Australian whom everyone knows and admires, but never sees. He is tall, this typical dream man, sun-tanned, loose-limbed, casually generous, and has a faraway look in his eyes that comes from scanning the wide horizons of his native land.

How this character retains his outdoor charm when nearly two-thirds of Australians live in cities is hard to understand. The Bronzed Hero's unfettered freedom, initiative and personal independence are ironically denied by nearly every citizen and kept alive mainly by food and clothing advertisements and patriotic posters.

The Typical Australian has seven younger brothers, personalities created by the six capital cities of the States and the Federal capital, Canberra. In the abstract the seven citizens have clearly defined attributes and shortcomings that are a compound of history, climate, landscape, crowd behaviour, architecture and local loyalties and attitudes. The Typical Citizen is criticized by everyone, particularly himself. He is not real because you will never meet an example of him in the flesh, but he is all the more real because he is seen only in the mind.

Any number of people claim that they can pick a Sydneysider from a Melbournian by the cut of his clothes, a man from Adelaide by his sincerity, a Brisbane citizen by his unsuspecting trustfulness, a Canberra man by his conventionality, a Hobart type by his honesty and a Perth man by his leisurely friendship. These characteristics, the knowing ones claim, are discernible anything up to half a mile away.

* * *

Sydney, the second white city in the Empire, has a population of nearly two million. The local inhabitants say that you have to be tough to survive in it, or tolerant enough not to let it worry you. It is Sydney's tolerance and indifference to the disapproval of outsiders that provides a great deal of the city's charm. Sprawled in the sun round a magnificent harbour, Sydney is like a good-natured adult lying on a beach with a group of fractious children in his care: the city disapproves of rudeness, greed, ugliness and vice as the adult

disapproves of the children's noisy antics, but does little about them in the belief that they will pass in the fullness of time.

One typical Sydneysider is the city slicker, a tight-lipped, nervous fellow whose suits are a little too padded in the shoulders to please conservative tastes. He is well adapted to the strain of a big city's perpetual competition for a seat in a tram, a better house, a bigger car, inside information on the horses and, inevitably, more money. The other Sydney type is the generous, casual fellow who likes spending money to show that he knows it is unimportant except as a means to enjoyment. He is in love with the sea and with the golden beaches where volunteers provide a life-saving service to make the surf as safe for splashing non-amphibious thousands as it is for them.

Sydney is a jumble of seething narrow streets, grimy slums, sun-bathed suburbs, a waterfront huddle of industrial wealth, and continually surprising glimpses of its essential beauty and saving grace, the sea. The Sydneysider likes to be thought a cynic, a man who has outgrown childish notions that honesty is the best policy and that standing still to gather moss is a virtue. But his cynicism is largely assumed as a protection against the possible embarrassment of being told his virtues.

The typical Sydneysider is both hard and easy to find. At first sight he appears to be everywhere, fighting five-deep for his evening beer, elbowing you off the footpath in a dash for a tram or ferry. Then, when one has time to really make friends with some Sydney people, it seems that they are average men and women who tend their gardens, love their families and grumble about taxes just as other people do in any other community.

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When someone says "Melbourne" you have time, not much, but a little time, to think of broad tree-lined streets, orderly traffic, solid buildings and bank balances, carefully dressed men with well-tailored wives, and prosperous respectability. Sydney's feverish, excitable man has gone, to be replaced by a sober figure who keeps to the left on the footpath and waits for the traffic lights to change before crossing the street. Yet he is not all plain sailing, this Melbourne man. He goes mad on winter Saturdays, roaring with rage or pleasure at the sight of a man leaping to catch a football in a game that Melbournians alone can understand.

Compared to some non-Australian Britishers, the Melbourne man is casual in his friendships and offers of hospitality: he asks a man to his home as easily as a Sydney man would ask him to have a drink. Newcomers trained in a tradition that such vague invitations to "come home to dinner" are merely polite expressions of goodwill, tend to express their thanks just as casually and forget all about them. But after a few months the newcomer may discover that the first offer still stands. Once he accepts it he finds that he has become a member of a new family, and he has a sense of security in a strange city that he may never achieve in other cities.

The Melbournian knows that he is regarded as a somewhat drab, safe fellow with a tradition of respectable culture, but he can laugh at this conception of himself because he is sure that it is not true. He feels he is responsible, an honest man with solid virtues, and happily free of the vices of high living and improvidence that beset his Sydney critics. But the Melbourne man backs horses and drinks beer just as earnestly as any other Australian, only, of course, in a slightly more gentlemanly fashion. Sydney, as Melbourne can and does retort, is superficial, a little too American, and obsessed not by culture, but by Our Bridge and Our Harbour.

Melbourne is a logically designed city where directions are cheerfully and reliably given. In Sydney, the Melbourne man will tell you, a stranger seldom knows how to direct you; but he often takes you there to make up for his city's lack of ordered pattern.

The Melbourne citizen, having completed a solid and profitable day's work, retreats with dignity to the flat sea of brick-and-tile suburbia, where in the privacy of his own garden he can shed his conservatively cut clothes and look like any other Australian, while he leans over his back fence and talks about dahlias or racing form. He probably knows a lot about both.

* * *

Adelaide, it has been said, has churches the way Sydney has pubs. And the Adelaide man, quietly proud of his city's sloping green river banks and the absence of vulgar bustle, is thought to adopt a somewhat righteous attitude towards his wealthier cousins. The Adelaide citizen may not have as much money as his Sydney or Melbourne counterpart, but he is bound to have a little tucked away for a rainy day, probably in a savings bank account rather than in the Melbourne man's fixed deposit or the Sydneysider's parcel of mining shares. His claim to culture is similarly a more personal and less pompous one: Adelaide's university is in and of the city, lending the Adelaide man an air of academic calm that sits well on his southern shoulders.

"Adelaide", with its steeped initial, is a prim, somewhat aloof word with a touch of blue-stockings superiority about it, a hint of Maiden Auntly disapproval of commercialism, rackets, night-clubs and too much lipstick. Perhaps this comes from the trees that march into the city's heart by the shining river, the lofty spires, and the carefully conventional gardens. Whatever the cause, the Adelaide man lives at a slower tempo and plays, rather than shouts advice at, the serious game of cricket. Hot, sweltering summers and cold, frosty winters encourage the Adelaide man to determination and sustained effort rather than to the flashy brilliance that he feels is the main characteristic of his bigger-city cousins. He is sure that his conservative taste in clothes, politicians and newspapers is a sign of superiority, and is content to know that Adelaide is the home of cricket in Australia because Sir Donald Bradman lives there. Not that the Adelaide man would mention it without being asked. The Adelaide man dislikes fuss, has fewer militant unionists to worry him, and even makes the bulk of Australian wine without losing an iota of decorum.

His great virtue of good-neighbourliness does not become apparent unless you settle in an Adelaide suburb. Then you find that it is essential to tend your backyard fruit-trees with care so that you may return the many gifts of home-made jam and preserves that will come your way. And if fruit-fly attacks your trees the misfortune becomes a general one. The whole district is alerted, and crops are picked and destroyed immediately to beat the pest regardless of individual sacrifice. This sort of community unity could occur nowhere in Australia but behind the neat clipped hedges of Adelaide homes.

When you make a friend in Adelaide you have him for life, in Melbourne you have him for years, and in Sydney you may see him tomorrow (or ten years hence) if it is fine. There are affinities between the three larger cities because they have industries as well as agriculture in the pattern of their economies, but Brisbane and Perth are still parts of their States, rather than self-contained communities.

Brisbane's man is unsuspecting, friendly and, despite the sub-tropical climate of his city, remarkably energetic. The city has still failed to grow large enough to dominate its river and most Brisbane people find solace in their gardens to make up for their city's lack of public beauty. Visitors never fail to be amazed at the Brisbane native's refusal to be beaten by the heat. No matter how the sun beats down and the humidity sticks your shirt to your back, the Brisbane man gallops about a tennis court or digs with unimpaired vigour. He can relax just as thoroughly, and his hospitality, offered without conventional fuss from a teapot or a bottle on his front veranda, is as easy for him to arrange as it is for his visitor to accept.

The great thing the Brisbane man prides himself on is his democracy, a casual social equality that springs from the city's lack of preoccupation with the advantages of private school education. Bank managers and milkmen are, more often than not, classmates, and retain their unaffected schoolboy comradeship as long as they know each other. It is ability that counts in Brisbane, not the exclusiveness of your school, and every student with the necessary brains has more or less the same chance of achieving a university education.

The Queenslander can come to stay in Brisbane without feeling lost or fearing that he will be tricked (Sydney), ignored (Melbourne), or patronized (Adelaide). The countryman knows that Brisbane is his city just as much as the next man's. The Brisbane man likes to read articles in his papers about the importance of culture and the achievements of the city in arts, music and literature. Down south they make money out of culture, but in our town, the Brisbane man will argue, there is time to cultivate art for art's sake, and without getting bohemian about it either.

Brisbane people dress as carefully to attend a concert or an art show as they dress casually for work. They approach the tall, sun-bleached Australian type more closely than people in other cities and look as if they could drive cattle or grow pineapples just as easily as work in an office.

* * *

Just as "Adelaide" looks prim and faintly righteous, so does "Perth" appear simple, unaffected and friendly. Everyone agrees that the man of Perth is hospitable, a fellow who has time not only to stand and yarn, but to wait till someone turns up. This leads to dry throats and the need for a leisurely beer, accompanied by long, comfortable silences that would worry a Sydneysider that he might not be proving an amiable host.

Perthians are proud of their King's Park, a great sweeping hillside of natural bush, and of their Swan River, which delights the city before drifting on to be useful as a port at Fremantle. The Perth man has not become busy enough to forget that the best things in life are free, and he gives himself time to enjoy them. He regards the noisy, worried eastern States with some anger as a group of gangsters who dominate the Commonwealth's economy and entice the young men and women of Perth to the east with promises of fame and riches. But this anger is seldom evident among people who are such enthusiastic hosts that feeling at Perth is sometimes even better than feeling at home.

When the Perth man comes east he retains his love of casual and slow-moving conversation, and stoutly maintains that time is a commodity to be used as you wish instead of something to be saved. Coming like a small boy to a big city, full of ambition and determination to succeed, gives the Perth man an advantage in the eastern cities that he is never slow to use. But before he knows what is happening to him the Perth man finds that

he is working harder than he ever would at home, and he realizes that he has lost something of his native charm. He feels that he can never recapture it until he goes home and has time to relax. Once there he can put himself together again, carefully reassembling the things that made him typical of Perth: the river, the trees, the quiet of a city that lives by commerce and not by industry, and the leisurely friendship that develops only in sunshine, matures with time, and is so different from the broiling activity of the "Eastern States".

* * *

The man from Hobart, according to popular opinion on the mainland, is a vigorous fellow, glowing with rude health. Visitors to Tasmania arrive in the deep-watered calm of Hobart with the impression that local conversation will be limited to apples, rugged mountain scenery and the advantages of being able to go home for lunch, a habit that gives Hobart's transport system four peak-hour rushes a day instead of two. But it soon becomes apparent that the Hobartian has the same attributes as his city: a lack of complication and a genuine regard for the rights of the individual in the community.

You can tell a Hobart man by his natural courtesy, a quality that prevents his advertising his city's charm and restrains his critical comments about other places. You get to know Hobart, as you get to know the people in it, slowly and with increasing pleasure. It is a quiet, unassuming place in a setting of natural grandeur between the mountains and the sea; it is refreshing to find a city that has not found it necessary to include the word "glamour" in its dictionary.

* * *

There remains, of the seven citizens, the distinctive personality of the Canberra man, the national administrator in a rural background. Canberra's formal beauty in a ring of blue hills delights the tired city eye until it bores it with "too much scenery". In its suburbs, planned to prevent congestion and the mixing of income groups, the Public servants cycle or motor to and from work safe in the knowledge that they are members of Australia's most secure community. Almost every street is lined with trees, roads circle green spaces that please the soul (but irritate the stranger in a hurry) and even the shopping centres have been made to look dignified.

Outsiders envy Canberra and its people for their inside political knowledge, and for their isolated objectivity, which tends to make the parochial enthusiasms of other cities appear a little childish. This Canberra superiority is made no easier to bear by the frequently remembered fact that it has been made possible only by the average man's taxes.

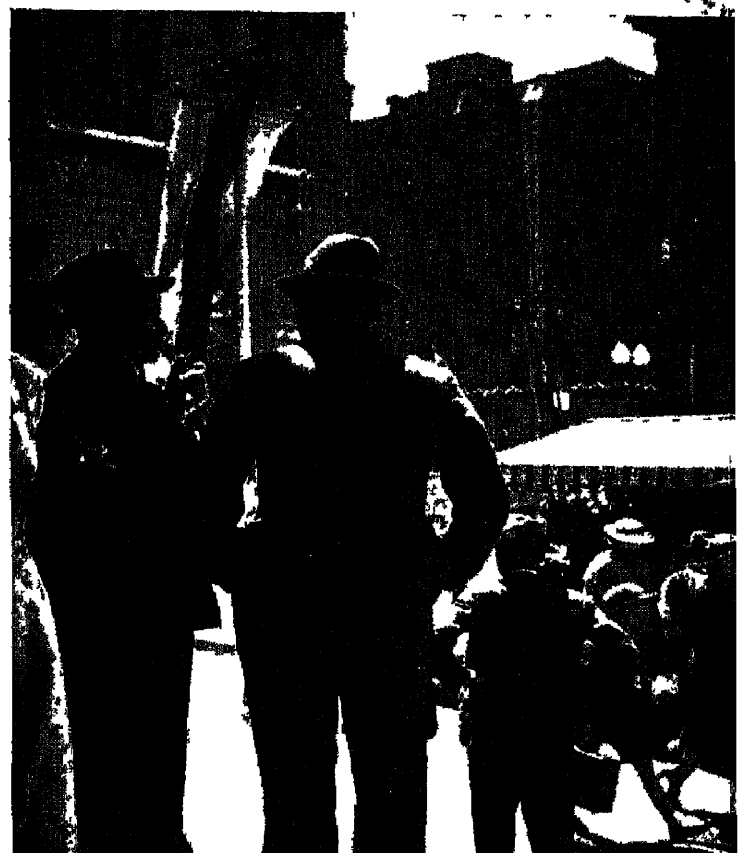
Although Canberra is the national capital, and its citizens come from every quarter of the Commonwealth, it is less typically Australian than any other part of the country. The reason is that Canberra was planned and the rest of the Commonwealth just grew. But this does not worry the Canberra man; he is by no means satisfied with the free and easy turmoil so beloved by his countrymen, he wants Australia to mature and have a mind of its own, an orderly mind fitted with pigeon-holes and not with irrational local enthusiasms.

Sydney's slickers, Melbourne's solid citizens, Adelaide's prim conservatives, Brisbane's democrats, Perth's warm-hearted hosts, Hobart's home-bodies and Canberra's planners are symbols in every Australian mind, but they exist nowhere else. They are abstractions that the newcomer sees clearly, but not for long.

After a time someone will charge him with having some local loyalty, and he will deny it hotly. If he does he will be a Typical Australian, whatever that may be.



SYDNEY—In modern, streamlined Sydney the itinerant barrow-man still has his place, selling fruit and vegetables at bargain prices. Martin Place, business centre in the heart of the city, takes on the gay colours of the seasons with its well-patronized flower stalls.





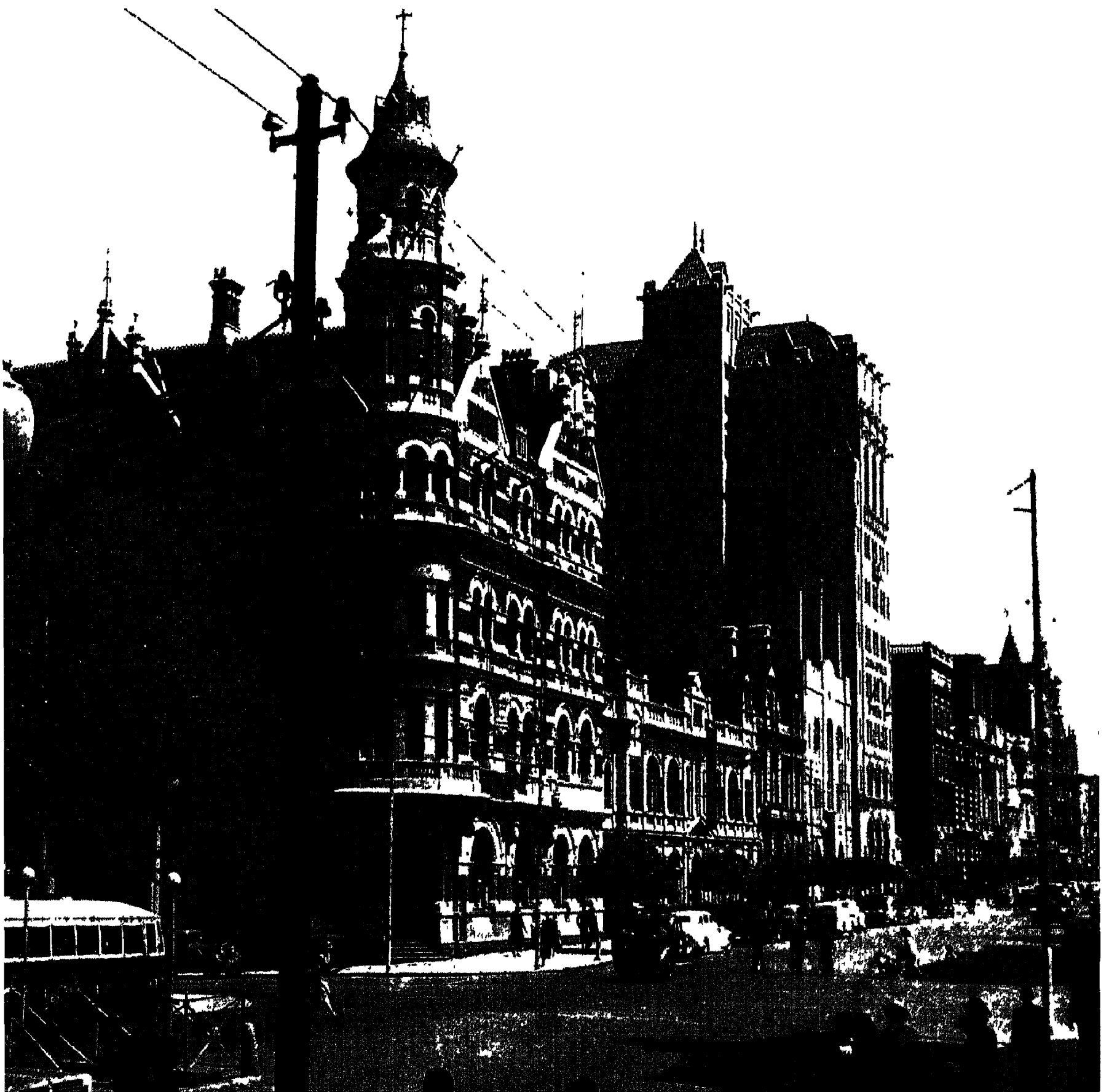
ANE — The banana city, enjoys warm sunshine all the year round. Its many palm-trees
s sub-tropical and leisurely atmosphere, and its City Hall is the finest building of its kind
ommonwealth, specially designed for symphony concerts and public meetings.



ADELAIDE—Designed by far-seeing town planners, Adelaide, capital of South Australia, is laid out in almost chequer-board symmetry. Graceful church spires, gardens, parks, and orchards add charm to this dignified city. In busy King William Street and North Terrace, suburban housewives and business men go leisurely about their occupations. The weather is invariably good.



PERTH—Once known as the Swan River colony, named after black swans first seen there, Perth, capital of Western Australia, and Fremantle, its seaport twelve miles farther down the beautiful river, have grown from a tiny outpost built to defend the west against French annexation, to the beautiful city and port of today. The discovery of gold at Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie gave the final impetus that brought prosperity. St George's Terrace is but one of Perth's many busy thoroughfares.



NEW AUSTRALIANS

by John Thompson

FOR the emigrant, one of the attractions of Australia is that it's a long way off, five weeks off, thousands and thousands of miles.

The old ship, chartered by I.R.O., plugs through the breathless tropics, creaks and groans protestingly when it meets the long swell from Antarctica. Here, where all is spread large and everything seems unenclosed, here, none the less, are havens.

Here, at long last, Sydney!

The populous hills and the high city buildings wheel slowly by in a crisp and sparkling dawn, till the pylons of the great bridge cut them sharply from sight. Pyrmont Harbour, where the old ship soon ties up, seems remote from the city that has only been glimpsed by the passengers. Customs men come aboard to examine everyone's baggage, which is then set aside for unloading. At noon the passengers descend to the food-smelly saloons for their last luncheon at the long fixed tables; but afterwards there is nothing to do, and they lie half naked on their bunks in the stuffy dormitories or stand about in groups on a narrow deck. A rattle of winches carries to and fro across this backyard of the harbour, but nothing of interest happens. The metropolis's back is turned, the tug or launch that now and then bestirs itself is engaged on its own affairs. Hour after hour, baggage comes up from the holds, lumped together in slings, and is lowered down to the wharf and stowed into railway freight-cars by a group of Australian workmen. One policeman strolls to and fro on the otherwise peaceful wharf. A big black car with a C on the numberplate draws up to the gangway and drives off again with two middle-aged men in conservative "quarter-fitting" three-piece suits and dark felt hats.

One more meal aboard, and the sunset glow dissolves into the glow of city lights reflected from clouds and water. Hours drag by till, sharp at 11 p.m., disembarkation begins. A long train waits alongside, and at sight of upholstered carriages a murmur of delight bursts from these shabby people who have known no such comfort for years, who have often been trucked like cattle, forgetting the name of privacy. They climb happily into the train in which they will journey till sun-up, westward in a strange land, a journey beyond old mountains which will hang around them in the starlight with cottages, orchards,

factories, plain little holiday towns, and especially with dripping cliffs of a wildness they cannot imagine; for never have they seen land so rough, so unmastered.

Twelve hours later a telegram from the Bathurst Migrant Centre is phoned through to the weatherboard buildings of the Migration Department at Canberra:

Fifteen hundred New Settlers received into camp without hitch.

(Signature) WILLIAM REES.

A major post-war problem is the placing of Displaced Persons. Millions from all over Europe were gathered to the Reich by the Nazis. Some went voluntarily, many were taken by force, and they worked willy-nilly for the Germans. After the capitulation millions went looking for their homes among the ruins of a continent. By road and rail, by whatever means they could, if need be by shanks's pony, they streamed homeward to Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, as well as to other countries.

Some, however, did not go—and were not willing to be sent. They preferred to remain “displaced”. They clung to the Western Powers, and in 1947, when U.N.R.R.A. handed over to I.R.O. (the International Refugee Organization) they were 800,000 in number.

Many have gone to England and France and very large numbers to the Americas. Australia received 1800 Polish ex-servicemen who are working on hydro-electric schemes in Tasmania, but these men formed an isolated group which should not be confused with the shiploads of Balts and Slavs who are now being brought to this country by arrangement with the I.R.O. The 12,000 Balts and Slavs who reached Australia in 1948 were chosen straight from the dreary D.P. camps in the Western zones of Germany. Originally they volunteered, and if they appeared suitable they were given a triple security check (by British, American, and then by Australian Security Officers) to eliminate any who may have been sympathizers or willing tools of the Nazis during the war years. If they came through this test they were medically examined and X-rayed for tuberculosis, and then, if sound in wind and limb, they were accepted for Australia.

Extraordinary attractions are not immediately evident at Bathurst, but food at least is plentiful. The former Army camp is still a transit centre for large numbers of people who have to be, as it were, processed—before being moved on quickly. There are no uniforms, no close columns on parade, but there are many patient queues waiting about all day, the buildings still wear their drab wartime camouflage, and crackling loudspeakers are constantly coughing out information and instruction among the huts and the trees.

The surroundings could hardly be more Australian—hills of brown grass scarred here and there by erosion, trees like twisted bones with thin scrumbles of foliage hooked into their forkings, and far away, beneath the clear sky and beyond the heat-shimmer and suspended dust, mysterious ranges, blue-grey like a vast bank of cloud. Very strange it must look to the migrants who have suddenly ceased to be D.Ps and have become, in a flash, new settlers or New Australians. One wonders how much nostalgia for Baltic marshlands or Central European valleys is mixed up with the hope and relief which they obviously feel. Not only will they need to accustom themselves to a landscape utterly foreign, as our own forefathers did, but also to a way of life that has grown from a foreign tradition.

Originally Australia offered to receive 200,000 of the D.Ps in European camps, but in 1948 the offer was extended to include all suitable persons who might volunteer to come.

It is no secret that we seek millions of new citizens to develop our country fully and perhaps, in a crisis, to enable us to defend it. We have done much already with this great southern land which lay so long neglected; we have opened up the wilderness, have made it vastly productive, and have raised as if by magic some of the world's great cities. But our numbers are still very few.

Not all Australians are wedded to the idea of a so-called White Australia, but it is natural that in any foreseeable future we shall look to European-type countries for the greater part of our new citizens. We have usually been able to assimilate new stocks within a generation, so that the children of migrant Germans, Scandinavians, Italians, Yugoslavs, seem to be just as Australian as any other children in the land. Now, however, with unprecedentedly large streams of foreigners pouring into the country, assimilation may well be slow and difficult if we ourselves do not aid it by wise action.

The Government, therefore, has taken this problem in hand. At the Bathurst and Bonegilla Migrant Reception Centres it is education that bulks largest in the "processing" which all the newcomers undergo for a period of one month. Soon after arrival they are medically examined and again X-rayed, but that is soon over. They queue up for a free issue of clothing sufficient for normal purposes, but that does not take long. They are interviewed singly by Government Employment Officers so that they may be sent to suitable work, but the interviews are brief and to the point. Education is in a different category, for as much time as possible is given to it, and it goes on day after day.

Standing among the instruction huts one can hear the English language being spoken and chanted all around one at various levels of proficiency. The Direct Method is used, and the teachers, most of whom are linguists with one or more European languages, meet their classes of eager men and women with supplies of maps, books, boxes, tools, cigarettes, musical instruments, and many other objects which they will teach them to identify.

"Is this a cup?" cries the teacher, holding up a saucer.

"No, thees ees not a cup," replies the class in chorus.

"Then," cries the teacher, "what is this?"

"Thees," chants the class, "ees a saucer."

Such a class is beginning at the very beginning and probably includes one or two people who have never been to school at all, even in their native lands. Many other newcomers are highly educated and already have at least a smattering of English. For them the Direct Method is adapted so that question and answer involve changes of person, number, and tense, with the result that the whole of each lesson verges on natural conversation. The most advanced classes are those in which the migrants already speak English so well that debates are held on all kinds of subjects, the teacher interposing from time to time to clear up the worst faults of speech. Emphasis is laid everywhere on the kind of vocabulary likely to be of use in hospitals, sawmills, brickworks, and similar places in which these students will soon be placed at work.

The month's schooling includes, above all, an unceasing "Australianization". The teachers are the first to laugh and shudder at this horrible agglomeration of syllables, but the meaning of the word is clear (if we must call it a word), and no period of instruction passes without some aspect of life in Australia being described or explained. It is necessary for the New Australians to understand our coinage, to be aware that traffic moves on the left-hand side of the street, and, in some cases, to be informed that Australians will react rather unfavourably to any man who loops up his hair in a net. They must be given a key

to Australian profanity and humour, for our chiacking, banter, and leg-pulling are apt to be bewildering to strangers. Moreover, they must be given a general idea of the vast and diverse geographical region to which they have now come. It is important too that they should understand the status of trade unionism and the fact that they will be expected to become members of unions, which are fully legal and which have much power in the land.

These New Australians do not get free transport, free clothing, free cigarettes, and are not fed and lodged at Government expense without being required to make some return. The Government has adopted a logical, kindly, simple, and, I like to think, Australian policy, which should go far towards allaying fears among the established population and, at the same time, should give the newcomers time to find their feet and also to regain what self-respect they may have begun to lose.

Seven days after they land in Australia they begin to be paid 25s. per head per week, but 20s. of this is deducted to pay for their keep while in the reception centre, where they are expected to do a few camp chores. They are left with a mere 5s. for tobacco, sweets, and suchlike odds and ends. Soon afterwards, however, within a month of their landing, they are drafted out to employment, and for two years they must work wherever the Commonwealth may think fit to direct them. During that period they may not change their jobs without official consent, although at any time they are free to appeal for a transfer.

The outstanding feature of the scheme is that they go to employment *at exactly the same rates of pay as Australian-born citizens must receive by law for the same types of work*. They enjoy the same rights and privileges, and pay the same taxes, as any other workers, and are thus, to all intents and purposes, fully received into the Australian set-up.

After two years they will be free to take what employment they please, or to launch forth in business for themselves, but in the meantime they will have made a real contribution to the nation which has given them a chance when they could see no chance. Theoretically, at least, they will be part and parcel of the pioneering adventure in which all Australians are still somewhat engaged, and it is hoped and believed that when they take out naturalization papers they will do so with a real affection for the country to which they and their children will belong.

But is this too pretty a picture? What are these people really like? Those hitherto who have had the best opportunity to size them up are those who are constantly handling them—immigration and employment officials, teachers, doctors, and nurses. There is much idealism among the Australians at the Bathurst Centre; they are rather exhilarated, too, by the bigness of the job they are doing; but they honestly like these people and consider them good material. The Czechs who have fled from Premier Gottwald do not seem to think well of the Balts, but the antipathies which some of the national groups have brought with them are no more pronounced than those which have been imported for a hundred and fifty years from England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. "Shrewdies" betray themselves at times, raising momentary doubts in the easy-going Australians, who quickly remind one another that many of these people have lived for years by their shrewdness and would not be alive at all if they had not used their wits. Gratitude is far more common than shrewdness or greed or suspicion—an almost unbearable gratitude, eager expressions of which one soon learns to forestall. The Australians insist that they are just doing a job of work and are not being specially kind, for it's horribly embarrassing, say, to admire some pretty little keepsake, a Lithuanian jug or a piece of Ukrainian cloth, and then to have it

thrust upon one, to be told and implored to keep it, as a present, a slight return, a token of a tearful woman's gratitude.

Along with the gratitude goes an intense wish to make good in Australia. There was no future for these people in Europe, and they have burnt their boats and committed themselves to this country so that for them everything now depends on becoming assimilated as quickly and completely as possible. They are always anxious to please, and one soon feels that it is something a good deal more positive than the fear of being returned to Europe which keeps them so orderly that nothing in the nature of police supervision is required at the Bathurst Centre, where as many as 4000 men, women, and children are being lodged at a time.

The scheme is not yet two years old, and the men and women from Bathurst and Bonegilla—peasants, mechanics, craftsmen, businessmen, broadcasters, artists, doctors, musicians—all alike must spend their first two years where the Commonwealth Government needs them. They sigh, sometimes, when they realize that their skilled surgeons' or pianists' hands may soon be subdued to rough labour in forests or brickyards or hospital laundries, but they accept the situation philosophically, for, after all, they have entered into it of their own free will. They know that the Australian Government wishes to use them as a mobile labour force, and it is already clear to them that some types of work, especially in the backblocks, will enable them to save a tidy sum by the end of their initial two years. Some will be used for seasonal work, cutting sugarcane or picking fruit; others will be employed on great water or sewerage projects; and everything they do will be valuable and absolutely essential to the community of which they are already a part.

So here they are, on shipboard, in camp, or going out to employment—the vanguard of many more thousands. Let us take a good look at them. Better still, let us talk to them, for they are eager to tell us why they are here, and we shall know them by their stories. Some fought with the Allies and were imprisoned by the Germans. One man was imprisoned by the Russians in 1941, by the Germans in 1942, both times on the same charge of being an Anglo-American sympathizer. Many fled from the advancing Russians in 1944, expecting to find shelter in Germany because they thought the Germans a "cultured" people—but these were disappointed. All alike echo the sentiments of the young Latvian woman who exclaims warmly: "And when we came to Australia I at least, personally, was impressed very much by the kindness of people. They treated us like we were people like themselves, and they were very kind to us, and didn't tell us that we must do this and do that in a harsh tone, and it was very pleasant. And we hope that we can adjust ourselves to the customs and habits of this land, and be free and happy people like Australians are."

What shines through as we listen to the broken speech, and as we study these foreign features, noticing particularly those with broad cheekbones, Slavonic eyes and noses with flat bridges—what shines through is that these are just ordinary people, people who have been in a jam and to whom we have given refuge. All parties in Australia have accepted them at their face value as people in distress, people who have been tossed about longer than ourselves by Mars's trailing cloak. They are beginning life anew, and we shall win them to everything which is best in the Australian code if we keep on giving them a fair go.

millionaires or mining men; Australia, after all, has become the most air-minded nation in the world, with 50,000 miles of air routes, over a million people flying every year.

Then the plane began to roll forward, engines surging, to race across the runway till red lights became a continuous blur, and the wings lifted, swayed and steadied, the ground slanting away beneath.

The baby sucked contentedly at the bottle, caring nothing for the drumming of two 1200 horse-power engines which, by bedtime, would have carried him from the grey Southern Ocean to leaning palm groves by the Timor Sea.

Ahead a whole world opened out, flat and featureless but for the corrugated coastal hills. Paddocks dwindled to a patchwork quilt; furrowed, gamboge and green. Below in Port Adelaide freighters stood at anchor upon their own reflections. A ribbon of white road unwound as far as the eye could see toward Port Augusta, and soon we hung above the narrowing headwaters of Spencer Gulf. There, its smelters smoking like cotton wool, Port Pirie made a toy town upon a tiny inlet, hardly suggesting the wealth men daily stacked upon its wharfs in lead bars and gold and silver bullion; some ten million pounds worth annually from the distant mines of Broken Hill. Across the Gulf, where a ripple of surf glinted, were the shipyards and blast furnaces of Whyalla; and, twenty miles inland, the remote red crag that was Iron Knob, a hill of pure iron from which a steel industry has grown to dominate the field of Australian politics and economy.

I turned to watch the sun thrust its rim above the sky-line. It glowed like a hot coal beneath a long dark bar of cloud. Between daylight and sunrise we had traversed as much country as transcontinental expresses cover in a morning. We had spanned three major sectors of a nation's productive wealth; the southern wheat belt, iron, silver-lead. Yet all that time we appeared to have been immobile in an ocean of green, clear sky. Then we came to the dry country of the Inland, the great sheep runs, with their crisp red soils, the delicate green patina of saltbush, unending mulga scrub.

It was a gaunt dry land, despite a summer of unprecedented rain. Even the great chain of lakes, reaching away inland for a hundred and fifty miles, held little water. Many were huge saltpans, bare, sun-bleached, curiously etched in whorls of white, copper and rust-red, as though eaten away by acids; the last shrivelled remnants of a vast waterway down which in prehistoric times an inland sea had drained into the ocean. Once this had been a green and prolific land, inhabited by dinosaurs, giant crocodiles and diprotodons. Now the heat of summer brought dust-storms and recurrent drought. For the best part of an hour we followed the barren, windswept shores of Lake Gairdner, two thousand square miles of salty nothingness; a dead world where, far to the east, the bare red crags of the Flinders Range furrowed a hot sky.

Here airliners must deviate from their former course, for the direct route lies across prohibited territory. Somewhere away in that dark mass of scrub thousands of men were building the grim structures of the Woomera rocket range, where experiments in atomic warfare are soon to start. It is fitting that such affairs be conducted in this wasteland; symbolic, too, of the threat of things to come.

Perhaps, after all, it would never come to that. From the plane's air-conditioned ease this wasteland seemed unreal, remote. The uniformed hostess came and went, serving three-course breakfasts as though in some quiet hotel; the mining man had pulled a sheaf of papers from his case; one of the blonde waitresses rouged her lips. Only the reflective, sunbitten man now sitting beside me seemed aware of the transformations upon the earth below.

"Been trying to get home for a week," he said. From his gait I had earlier assumed him no stranger to horses, and now it transpired that he owned a sheep station near Mount Eba, our first stop. "Two inches of rain, y' know, and this country's a quagmire. Been bogged to the axles a sight too often to get caught again. Well, there'll be good feed when it dries off. Looks like a real good year"

"Seems pretty bare down there yet," I said.

"From this height you can't really tell. Good saltbush country, this. Dry, y' know. But everything that grows is edible—Mitchell grass, spear grass, neverfail—even the mulga. This is the country for fine wool."

Then we came down for an easy three-point landing at Mount Eba, taxi-ing in towards the trim sandstone homestead and iron-roofed stockmen's huts. It was good to go out into the hot Central Australian sun, aware of the wide silences and a sky-line that ebbed away over the ends of the earth. Northward the mirage glittered, blue as a lake. Here was the real Australia, the rich and subtle colouring, the grandeur of the outback; yet it is a land that few Australians know, so citified a nation have we now become.

The agent who met the plane was, characteristically, a station man, manager of Mount Eba and one of a large family of stockmen from the famous Birdsville Track. I had a message for Bob Crombie from one of his brothers and recognized him at once, for the Crombies are all cast from the one mould; typical men of the back country with their broad, strong-boned faces and gentle drawl. His narrow-lidded, pale blue eyes bespoke a lifetime of looking out upon wide distances.

We yarned for a while on matters of feed, rainfall and the price of wool, and then the hostess called her passengers aboard, the plane turning into the wind on schedule for the next long hop to Oodnadatta. Climbing over the low and rugged Stuart Range, whose western scarps vanished in heat haze somewhere out by the opal fields of Coober Pedy, we soon found ourselves above a world of eroded, flat-topped hills, with dry watercourses pencilled across the landscape like a child's erratic scrawl and the glittering ochre of gibber plains. Like the serir of the Sahara, these gibbers are wind-polished ironstone pebbles packed close as a tessellated pavement; yet this is no desert land. We were entering the vast and unfenced cattle country that extends from Oodnadatta to the far north coast; the legendary country of the Wild West, of hard-riding stockmen in ten-gallon hats, buckjumpers, duffers and horsebreakers, of cattle camps on lonely plains where old hands spin sardonic, bushmen's yarns over the fire by night as they have done for generations, living a strenuous nomad's life little different from the good herdsmen of ancient Biblical times.

Flying above the brown clay bed of Lake Cadibarrawirracanna, the pilot reported his position to air-radio at Oodnadatta, calling for a weather report. We were running into heavy cloud, which swirled and towered above us, dazzling as snow in the sun. Promptly a reply came back through his headphones:

"Air-radio Oodnadatta calling VH-TAL . . . five-eighths large strato-cumulus at 6000 feet . . . showers in area . . . visibility five miles . . . five miles . . . surface wind 120 degrees . . . fifteen to twenty miles an hour Over to you. . . ."

Through the glass of the cockpit captain and co-pilot stared down at the inhospitable land below, noting landmarks; some well-known river-bed, a prominent quartz-capped hill, the glint of a station homestead or a stock tank. Men had often been bushed down there, had wandered among the dry sandhills and had perished for want of water, leaving their bleached bones to be found months or years after, or maybe never at all. But now we

rode the skies secure in the knowledge that men checked our position, noting the pilot's reports each half-hour. It was hard to recall that only the camel had made it possible for pioneers to open up this hazardous country. Oodnadatta has always been first of all a camel town, inhabited by bearded Afghans whose baggy trousers, silk turbans and eloquence of gesture are vanishing now that Diesel trucks and planes have entered in. All over the back country went the camel strings, thirty and forty to a team, one slender noseline hitched to the tail of the beast ahead, carrying stores, machinery, wool bales, boring plants, over sandhill and waterless plain. Until the railway was extended from Oodnadatta to the Alice twenty years ago, camels were the only means of travel, and with them the police of the Centre still make regular patrols, taking native trackers as interpreters and scouts. Only a year or two back airliners here were refuelled from camel-drawn waggons.

As we came low over the broad and sanded bed of the dry Neales River, over copper-hued flat hills and the graceful, grey-green mulga-trees, it was astonishing to find a town upon these enormous plains. Oodnadatta is more than a cluster of white houses about one wide, bare street. It is an outpost of humanity amid ancient silences that seem always on the point of engulfing it for ever, so tenuous is man's hold upon a land that resists his efforts to tame and harness it.

But from Oodnadatta north, amid the ever-curving striations of the red earth below, the spines of hills, twisting dry watercourses, the arc of painted sandhills, there runs one straight and slender line—the Alice Springs railway down which roll the cattle trains for the southern markets. Alongside I could just make out an even thinner line, threaded from one iron pole to another. Sometimes the Overland Telegraph Line follows the railway, sometimes the barely distinguishable road—if so sandy a track can be called a road; sometimes it cuts through gorges, over hills and spinifex plains, twisting among sandhills. The telegraph line—familiarily known throughout the Territory as the O.T.—is as lonely a line as you would find anywhere in the world, but it represents a triumph of human endeavour. Built from coast to coast at the cost of no little suffering, loss of life and thwarted hopes, it was completed back in 1872, linking Adelaide with Darwin, where a cable had been laid under the sea to Java. All the way to the Timor Sea we were seldom to be out of sight of this persistent line, and every two hundred miles or so passed over long-established telegraph stations where once operators had to repeat each telegram transmitted, but which now are merely used for boosting power. In bygone days the isolated linesmen had to fight off hostile blacks; they built and patrolled their lines by camel; they suffered fierce heat, loneliness and sometimes hunger so that news might travel from London to Australian capitals in a single day.

Crows, nesting on the poles, short-circuited the wire; floods and storms disrupted it; nomadic tribes stole the insulators and flaked them into spearheads; white men perishing of thirst cut it in a desperate bid for aid. It was the lifeline of a continent, making endless demands on those who spent their lives in serving it.

Beyond the tree-fringed waterholes of the Finke we appeared to enter an eternity of sandhills. Red-ribbed and naked under the hot sun, a skeleton travesty of earth, they writhed away south-east in wide, treeless parallels, the marginal country of the Simpson Desert across which only two parties have yet struggled. "Nothing to look at here, boy," said the long-jawed sailor, turning away from the window. "Bags of nothing." His mate casually poured out two glasses of beer. The baby, just learning to walk, wandered up and down the aisle, fell, crawled and stood again.

Between this child, struggling to extend his powers, and John McDouall Stuart was a gulf wider than the three generations that separated them. Stuart, that tough-fibred pioneer of the Centre, had taken nine months to fight his way across the continent; a passage that would take our plane little more than as many flying hours. Only at his third attempt did he succeed, after two years of suffering. We were in his country now, over the places that he named, each one a triumphant milestone in his career. I wished that T.A.A., which names its planes after Australian explorers, had put the *John McDouall Stuart* on this run, but it happens to be a Skymaster, flying between the capitals. Our DC 3, not unfittingly, was named the *Sturt*, after another courageous man who tried to penetrate the Never-Never, only to be beaten back by the gaunt sandridges of the Simpson Desert. It was with Captain Sturt that McDouall Stuart gained his first experience of a land so alien to the compact, well-watered Scotland of his youth.

At 11.25 the pilot switched on his radio transmitter, calling into the microphone, "VH-TAL to air-radio, Alice Springs . . . passing over Deep Well . . . landing in ten minutes . . . standing by. . . ."

And then, ahead of us, rucking up from the deep blue shadows of the earth, there rose a long rampart of powdery red. Steep crags, precipices and high, tumbled rock towered above a landscape so green it was unbelievable after the Simpson sandhills. Those who have never seen the MacDonnell Ranges have yet to discover the heart of Australia, for here is the rich and glowing core of the land, overwhelming in its beauty. This is no "dead heart", for summer rains conjure up the luxuriant green of Mitchell grass; mulga, casuarinas, bloodwoods soften the park-like plains. Amid the red ranges, up rugged and green valleys, beside the yellow sands of the Todd River are the ghost gums, stout-boled and gleaming whitely in tropical sunlight. Vivid green parrots, painted finches, white cockatoos rise in mass formation from the trees. In the centre of the range, between two red, purple-shadowed ridges lies the town of Alice Springs.

"Fasten your seat belt please," said the hostess in my ear. "We're landing now." But I found it hard to accept yet the splendour of the new world we were entering. I had dined in rainy Melbourne the night before, slept in Adelaide and, well before lunch-time, had come over twelve hundred miles to the painted centre of a continent.

Alice Springs, once a far-off township of which many talked but which few had ever seen, has lately become a popular resort, attracting artists, writers, and many tourists, for it has a magnificent winter climate, sunny and dry, with scenic beauty to rival the much-publicized wonders of Texas and Arizona. Within a day's travel are the astonishing rock structures of Mount Olga and Ayre's Rock, Simpson's Gap, the Devil's Marbles with their gigantic red granite boulders balanced miraculously one upon another, Hermannsburg Mission where Albert Namatjira the aboriginal artist paints his striking watercolours, Palm Valley with its prehistoric trees. Thousands of Australians "discovered" Alice Springs during the war, when it was a vital staging camp for defence posts farther north. The Territory, thanks to the tourist bus, is ceasing to be a land of myth and tall tales, where anything is possible, the more incredible the better. Yet it is still not the tourist who dictates its atmosphere, but the roving, vigorous, independent Territorian who long ago turned his back upon the soft-living world of the cities Inside.

Therein lies the key to understanding Alice Springs. The Alice is hometown for men and women scattered throughout the Territory's five hundred thousand square miles; for stockmen and gold-miners in from the Granites, kangaroo-shooters, tin-scratchers, well-

sinkers, drovers and graziers who reckon their holdings by the thousand square miles. It is a place where spreading ghost gums are still allowed to grow in the main street, where full-blood natives stroll about in coloured shirts and stockmen's hats, and their lubras in bright gina-ginas, where rough-riders and colt-breakers spin out a day yarning under the shaggy bull-oaks outside the pub. From his base radio station the Flying Doctor advises patients hundreds of miles away, or flies out to urgent cases in a chartered plane. Within two miles of the town, amid the rugged red rocks of the MacDonnells, is an aboriginal reserve where the last of the Aranda tribe still hunt and roam as their stone-age ancestors have always done.

If the Alice is far from the uproar of cities, and glad it is to be so, it is none the less quick to adopt modern modes of living. Connellan Airways has a network of routes that tap the remotest settlements outback; there are several private planes like the Davis Brothers' Percival Gull in which they fly almost daily to their cattle station over the range. Eddie Connellan, an airman of enterprising spirit, has within six years built up a service that reaches out to missions, stations, townships and mining camps, carrying mail, light freight and passengers, who no longer have to spend days driving over uncertain tracks. He has proved to the cynics that development of the Never-Never is possible through aerial transport.

As our liner lifted easily above the jumbled red peaks of the MacDonnells, just after midday, I recalled that only ten years ago men had doubted the possibility of flying from Adelaide to Darwin in one day. "It took a hard day's flying to get to the Alice," John Chapman, T.A.A.'s Flying Operations Manager, had told me back in Melbourne, "and then another up to Darwin. In the early days we had no proper maps, no radio, no ground organization at all." Captain Chapman had pioneered the route for Transcontinental Airlines in 1935, flying C. T. Ulm's historic *Faith In Australia*, the plane which had made records between England and Australia. Within two years Chapman was regularly flying a Lockheed Ten over this route for Guinea Airways and, in 1946, joined T.A.A. with over two million air miles to his credit.

Twelve miles north of the Alice we crossed the tropic of Capricorn and soon were above Central Mount Stuart, that low and broken, scrub-topped range which McDouall Stuart had determined as the centre of the continent. Not long after passing this range, on the first of his three attempts to reach the northern sea, Stuart had found himself in serious trouble, recording that "The day was intensely hot, and my horses cannot stand two more nights without water. It is dreadful to have to turn back on the threshold of success." Yet he still would not retreat, enduring more waterless stages, more nights without sleep until he wrote that "The muscles of my legs are changing from yellow-green to black, my mouth is getting worse, and it is with difficulty that I can swallow anything. I am determined not to give in."

Beneath us I could see a broad swathe of bitumen accompanying the telegraph line; over it there runs today a weekly bus service right through to Darwin, and many freight trucks. Bores and wells have drawn water from under the dry earth that confounded Stuart. What would his wearied companions, or the first O.T. linesmen, have made of the dust raised by passing trucks, the pedal radios linking one remote homestead with another, the drone of our plane overhead? I began to scan the earth for the Barrow Creek telegraph station, scene of a bygone tragedy, and presently located it—two glinting roofs beneath a red and spiny hill. Once I had stood outside that lonely station, now a wayside post-office, listening to the whirr of its tall windmills generating power. There, beneath a big, broad-

leaved bean-tree is a single tombstone upon which you may read: "In memory of James L. Stapleton, stationmaster, and John Franks, linesman, killed by natives, Barrow Creek, 23rd February 1874."

The blacks were a savage lot in those days, hence each telegraph station, built of solid sandstone, had a central courtyard, iron-barred windows and slits in the walls for rifles. But on that summer's evening the seven white men had relaxed their watch, believing the tribe to be friendly. They sat in the open, one of them playing his violin. They saw the blacks come down the hill. They seemed to be unarmed. But they dragged spears between their toes through the long grass. Their attack was so sudden the linesmen could not defend themselves, and two were speared before they reached the shelter of the courtyard. With a barbed spear through his breast, the station-master reported the attack by morse to Adelaide, operating his key while the battle continued outside. Twelve hundred miles south they brought his wife to the busy telegraph room of the city's General Post Office and there, amid machines ticking out messages from all over the continent, Mrs Stapleton sent a final message to her dying husband.

"Barrow Creek," the mining man from Tennant was saying across the aisle, "that's one place I've got to see. There's a copper show out there. . . ."

"The Home of Bullion," said the senior official quietly.

"Ghost, a man's no chance of buying into that. But there's others. Tin's showing up well. Reckon it'd pay a man to do some real prospecting. Nobody's the least idea yet what's to be found in the Territory. One of these times we'll strike another Broken Hill or Mount Morgan."

The senior official remained non-committal. Perhaps it was his job to be. Or perhaps he recalled that fatal rush out to the Granites in 1932, when men perished for want of water. "Tragedy Track", they called it then. As Tennant Creek began to grow larger on the dry plain ahead—a long chain of iron and timber houses under the rugged Honeymoon Range—its expanse revealed beyond question the reality of mineral wealth. The mining man pointed out to me the three distinct lines of lode, clearly visible from above in the form of long outcrops running east and west. Banking towards the wide, red aerodrome, we passed low over the shafthead and battery of the Eldorado, which in fourteen years has produced three-quarters of a million pounds of gold. A week or two before another mine had changed hands for £200,000.

This remote township with its broad and surprisingly empty main street, its banks, co-operative store and roadside cafes offering to travellers meals at all hours day and night, seems to typify the varying fortunes of the Territory. Within two decades it has grown from a single building, the Overland Telegraph station, to a thriving centre for mining and cattle men. Freight trucks constantly roll through on the long route to Darwin, or out over the immense Barkly Tableland to historic cattle stations like Anthony Lagoon and Alexandria, whose territory covers 11,800 square miles.

"You'll strike plenty of life here," one mining manager told me. "Wait till the ringers come in from the big stations. I've heard that many mobs of cattle mustered in the pub—I wonder they never stampeded and killed the lot."

It was a rare stroke of fortune, when the plane took off again, to find my new neighbour a cattleman famous throughout the Territory. He had an age-wrinkled face and drooping white moustaches, but I would never have taken him for eighty-one. He said he was picking up a Connellan Airways plane at Katherine for Wave Hill, where he was going to buy store bullocks.

"No, I'm not bringing them across myself," he said. "Don't worry, I've done it often enough. First time I come out here was back in eighty-six—with Nat Buchanan. You've heard of him, I reckon?"

Heard of him! He was one of the pioneers of the Territory, the man who had first stocked up the great stations of the North-West, bringing cattle overland from the Queensland coast where none had travelled before.

"It was bad country in those days," he said quietly. "No water. Man had to be a *real* bushman then. In ninety-one I took a mob of horses through from Camooweal to the Ord River. Struck out almost due west from Tennant. Bad country, y' know—all dry scrub and spinifex. Well, I was lucky. We found water in some gilgais about fifty mile out. They reckoned I was mad to try, but I got through.

"Queer thing," he added, presently. "Out by those gilgais I struck traces of gold. That was forty years before the field at Tennant was opened up. Well, no one could have done much with it then—not without water."

We passed over the dry bed of Attack Creek, where Stuart's party had been driven back by blacks who showered them with spears and boomerangs, and then set fire to the tall grass; over the endless and sombre bullwaddy scrub through which the explorer succeeded in forcing his way only after two years; over the magnificent expanse of Newcastle Waters which succoured his exhausted men and horses. Extending away north-west from the station buildings (a virtual township of its own) was the thin, red, wavering thread of the stock route out to Wave Hill and Victoria River Downs, the world's largest cattle run. It was the notorious Murrniji Track.

"The Murrniji's none so bad as she was," my old-timer said. "There's bores along her now. One time there was a dry stage of 110 miles. I've travelled cattle right through from Wave Hill to the Yellow Hole without a drink. You come up the Armstrong, through dry gullies in the stony hills, then from the Jump-Up you're amongst tall spear grass and bullwaddy scrub and lancewood. The timber's that thick, with sharp branches growing right out from the ground, you've the devil's own job driving the cattle through. And if there was no water in the Yellow Hole or the Murrniji itself, there wasn't a beast in the country could move. No, I'm thinking that droving's not the job for an old fellow like me at all."

It was out in that same arid country that Anderson and Hitchcock perished in 1929. They had flown out in a light plane, searching for Kingsford Smith, their old associate who had been reported lost, presumably somewhere in the Kimberleys. But they, too, disappeared. The man who located them was a young Qantas pilot, Lester Brain, now general manager of T.A.A. "Since there was no news of the blacks sighting their plane on the cattle runs south-east of Wyndham," he told me recently in his Melbourne office, "I reckoned they must have been forced down in the desert area this side of Wave Hill. Reaching Newcastle Waters from Brisbane, I flew out towards Wave Hill and detected a very faint sign of smoke some sixty miles south of the Murrniji Track. Then we found a small area of spinifex burnt out and still smoking, and, near by, the small silver outline of the missing plane. Tracks indicated that several attempts had been made to take off, but you could see that the two men had perished before they could clear the spinifex and scrub."

It was a notable piece of navigation, made possible by Lester Brain's previous knowledge of this desert country. But, as he pointed out, "Conditions in the Centre change little with the years. It shows how private aviators, without radio or organized flight supervision, can easily fly into a locality and perish, if they happen to be forced down."

As the hostess, carrying a tea-tray, swung open the cockpit door, I heard the crackle of radio above the pilot's seat. It seemed we were in touch with Katherine already. Beside me the old cattleman, still suspicious of these new fangled planes, was marvelling at the rate of our advance. We fell to discussing Nat Buchanan's great feat when, after twelve months with cattle from the Queensland coast, he was forced to ride on for three hundred miles to replenish his stores. Superb bushmanship brought him right in to the Overland Telegraph station at Katherine, the one oasis of settlement within thousands of square miles. When he located his mob again, he found one drover had been killed by the blacks, and others were on the point of setting out to search for him.

As we shook hands on the Katherine drome, casually, as though to say we might run across one another sometime in the next twenty years, my heart went out to this straight old man. He stemmed from a more spacious, but almost forgotten age. He could neither read nor write, but his had been the kind of schooling that writes history.

Now, a mere fourteen degrees below the Equator, we had come to a new style of country altogether; a green, well-watered, hilly land, untamed. The thickly-timbered Katherine River was running a banker, thanks to the violent storms of the Wet. Every river between there and Darwin was flowing, swollen and broadly-shining beneath the plane, which began to lift and shudder amidst black, squally clouds. My neighbour now was a small, sharp-eyed, ageing man with yellowish skin and long brown moustaches. He spoke with a strong, guttural accent; German, I assumed, though he assured me that twenty-five years in the North had made him Australian. Only by a miracle had he caught this plane at all, for he managed a tin-mine fifty miles away on the Edith River, and they had slung him across its torrent in a flying-fox.

He seemed vastly tickled by the two handsome Chinese women who now sat ahead of us, fussing over three alert, crop-headed kiddies with sleek brown flesh. "You see them Chinese girls," he said in his quick, excitable way. "I know them when they so high. Only piccaninnies. Now they got piccaninnies themself. I tell you that how long I been in this country!"

Then he began to point out landmarks below, to name rivers, broken-capped peaks, valleys and tumbled gorges where wild rivers foamed, great burnished waterways like the McKinley and Adelaide rivers, and then, as we neared the sea, he spoke of the broad mangrove swamps and tidal reaches where men hunted crocodile, where wild duck darkened the sky in flight. Son of a Hamburg seaman, he had adopted Australia as his homeland after the cosmopolitan fashion of many Territorians. Darwin's spirit does not belong to Anglo-Saxon Australia, but to the Tropics. Its flag is the palm frond streaming in the monsoonal breeze. Among its most loyal citizens are Chinese, Swedes, Germans, Malays—and, of course, the first though not always remembered inheritors of the land, the aborigines.

With the green, foam-flecked waters of Darwin's huge harbour below us, my German friend became pained and puzzled by the insistence of the hostess that he should fasten his safety belt before we landed.

"Look," he said, "if the plane crash, I do not care. I am fatalist. I have no dependants. Besides, if we crash down, I cannot get out of window."

The hostess patiently explained that it had nothing to do with crashing. "It's a regulation," she said. "If there happened to be a jolt on landing, and your head hit the roof, you just might finish up in hospital."

"But I do not ask you to pay," he cried. "Look, I come down on holiday. I have plenty

money." Again he waved aside her explanations. "Look, I am sailor. You see? Three time I been round world. I been on deck in China Sea—in typhoon. But I do not care. You see, I am fatalist."

"All the same, sir, would you mind doing up your belt?"

She won, of course, despite his protests. Other passengers were more accommodating, eager to end the long flight. The sailors were making plans for a night's amusement; the man with the sleeping baby tried to stretch without waking him up; the senior official fingered his brief-case impatiently. It seemed that I alone had no desire to land. It had been a long journey; but one so rich and eventful I would have prolonged it. It was a vision splendid of a continent too wide to grasp at once. From the cold seas of the south to this green brilliance; over the brown and vigorous earth of the Inland, the fantastic salt lakes, the sandhills sculptured by wind, the red mountains, the great dry river-beds and prehistoric hills, over the luxuriant timber of the north, the tropical vitality of the coast. Once a bushman from the Kimberleys had said to me, "Mostly you folk only like the cities—and the people. But you don't love the land."

I wondered if it were possible not to love the land.

This sere brown land had a vitality that was breathless in its panoramic quality. In Central Australia it was as burnt as the skin of a woman grown old in the sun, age wrinkled, with the vigour of a peasant who retained her powers after the normal span, who toiled still and created, her seeding time not yet done. Worn and puckered, the land was so immeasurably old that you felt the whole of history was brief as the flash of a hawk's wings in the sun. It brought new perspectives, immunity from the jealousies and pettiness of an increasingly suburban world; the rantings of political Caesars would here have sunk into a silence so profound as to leave no echo. But not the silence of death. It was a living silence, patient and enduring. A silence that had listened to the birth pains of a continent, seen the coming and decline of antediluvian monsters, the slow growth of rain forests, their slower petrification, the drying up of the great inland sea, the crumbling of mountain ranges worn down to the weary level of the gibbers, then the cautious wanderings of the blacks who had taken perhaps a hundred thousand years to know and love their strange surroundings, to invent their creation myths. It was a land to humble you, a vast land; a land of infinite beauty. It was a whole continent, one of the five great land masses of the world; a raw and potent land to be made over into whatever its people wished if they had the vision and the will. . . .

And then the wheels touched earth, and the clouds were far above. We pulled up before the long hangar; the engines died. This was Darwin, right enough, the fertile, independent North. Outside the drome rank grass grew eight feet high. There were hardy pandanus, frangipanni, poinciana-trees. All day we had journeyed across this continent, away from the tamed and familiar world, over twenty degrees of latitude, yet so wide was it that we were still within the borders of Australia.



AIR-TRAVEL—A well-known cattleman, who pioneered the Never Never sixty years ago, is greeted by a friend at Katherine, still a little bewildered by modern modes of travel in an ancient land. Adelaide to Darwin takes twelve hours.

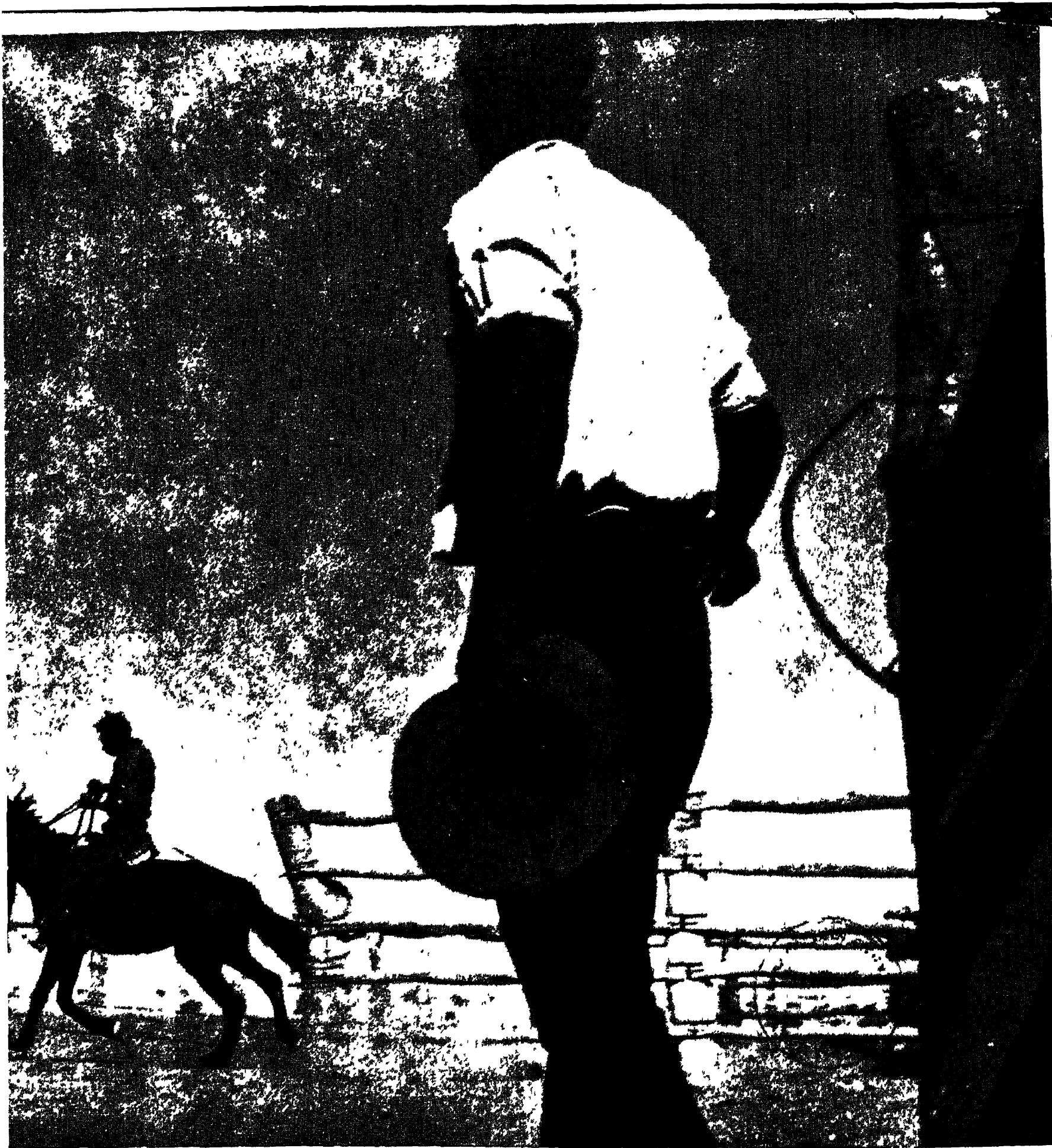


THE CENTRE—Under the shade of a bull oak, old-timers at Alice Springs regard life as futile without the leisure to yarn. Shady trees are essential in the Alice, where summer temperatures sometimes reach a hundred and twenty degrees. Tennant Creek has a Wild West look.



A modern highway from Alice Springs to Darwin supplants the former dusty track. But distances are still immense even though transcontinental passengers may now travel in the fast Overlander bus. Blow-outs in the tropics are frequent, and station people must travel many miles from their homesteads to collect their mail from the roadside.





THE ABORIGINE, once a nomadic, stone-age tribesman, has adapted himself so well to pastoral work that few white stockmen today can equal him. As buckjumper, horsebreaker, drover and cattleman he has made himself the main support of an industry that could not exist without him.

ROUGH-RIDERS—No bush meeting has acquired so much fame as the Negri Races, staged every year in a remote corner of Old River Downs, one of the largest cattle stations in the Northern Territory. Graziers, stockmen, drovers and prospectors travel for hundreds of miles to see the fun. It provides a carnival in the time-honoured style of the Wild West, with many a tall yarn told, much exuberant activity, including the riding of buckjumpers whose one aim in life appears to be to toss the adventurous stockman off their backs. There is never any lack of an audience for these buckjumping contests, and the man who lasts the distance is the hero of the day.





This New England farmer and his wife, living just outside Glen Innes, come in to church each Sunday, thankful for the good life that their sheep and wheat paddocks provide in one of the most fertile regions of northern New South Wales.

PATTERN OF A NATION

by Professor R. M. Crawford

WE have lived in this land for one hundred and sixty years. With all its mistakes, we can take pride in our story. Yet Australia was born in squalor and reared, in its infancy, in neglect. The vision of a future empire was Phillip's, not the Government's that sent him; for Pitt's Government undertook the settlement of New South Wales only to solve an immediate and irksome difficulty: the disposal of persons convicted of crime. Even Australia's staple industry, the growing of fine wool, had its foundations in wretchedness. For while the capital that nourished the pastoral expansion of Australia's squatting age came from Great Britain as investment in an industry of certain promise, it was Macarthur's capital that had made that promise certain by proving the fitness of Australia for growing fine wool; and Macarthur had arrived in the colony in debt and had made his money as a leader of the Rum Ring.

But there was much on the other side. For convicts there was misery in plenty, but for some of them also, in the lottery of transportation, a chance to improve their lot. And we were fortunate in many of our founding fathers. Though all the cards were stacked against him, Governor Phillip dared to believe in the future of this strange country that offered so little help to first-comers. The troubles of Macquarie's reign are less important than the fact that he, too, partly through the necessity of employing new floods of convicts, but mostly through foresight, laid foundations for the growth of a free community. Whatever the excesses in his practice, his refusal to lend his vice-regal countenance to a caste system of free and emancipist was on the side of the angels. His public building did more than supply the needs of a quickly growing community, it added a leaven of permanence and dignity that has an importance beyond telling in a colonial community where improvisation and a rough wooden temporariness are the rule. Moreover, through all his differences with Macarthurs and Blaxlands, his more public vision joined forces with theirs when he built a road over Blaxland's route across the Blue Mountains and founded Bathurst from which the flocks of colonial New South Wales fanned out, south and west and north, over the inland slopes and plains.

When Macquarie left for England in 1822 the stage was set for the growth of a pastoral economy in Australia, and, with it, the birth of the first distinctively Australian pattern of culture, a pastoral civilization.

The speed with which vast areas of the continent were occupied and a many-sided community built can be understood only if it is remembered that Australia's history runs together with the Industrial Revolution, for it created the need that was the colonists' opportunity—the hunger of English mills for fine wool that neither Spain nor Saxony nor Silesia could supply in full. Moreover it supplied the means—capital and men—to fulfil the need.

Quickly, in the thirties and forties, the flocks of merinos spread out from the scattered islands of settlement, Sydney and those that had been added behind the protecting shield of British sea-power and for various reasons, Hobart Town and Launceston, Port Phillip, Adelaide and the Swan River. The sheepmen followed the explorers, or explored for themselves, and by 1850, on the eve of the gold-discoveries, 16,000,000 sheep roamed on Australian pastures. That number was small compared with the 106,000,000 of forty years later, but it was enough to mark the pastoral character of the colonies, the leadership in them of the pastoralists and of the merchants and bankers whose affairs were so closely entwined with theirs.

It was this that gave meaning to W. C. Wentworth's dream of established landed families that should govern colonial society as the English squirearchy governed rural England. True, the conditions of this pastoral civilization of early colonial Australia were often crude in the extreme before bark or slab hut gave way to more permanent dwelling, and it rested on service that, whether convict or free, was compelled rather than traditional. But in older settled or richer areas, such as Macarthur's Camden or Mitchell's Australia Felix, makeshift in time gave way to substantial and permanent building, and to a way of life that had its graces. The future of Australian history was to be hostile to the continued dominance of this pastoral culture, and this fact, together with the clinging of its leaders to English ways, through furnishings and fashions, the education in England of their children and the import of English books and magazines, has obscured the fact that it was, after all, an Australian pastoral culture. Indeed, it was still the dominant pattern in Australian culture at the turn of the century in such areas as the Western District of Victoria with its urban manifestation in Toorak.

In 1850 the south-eastern colonies were making plans for self-government. It seemed clear that they would establish government by men of property in favour of a pastoral economy. Not that they would do so unopposed, for the free and assisted immigration of the past twenty years had brought in many people of radical experience and radical views, including some future leaders such as Henry Parkes. But if this immigration had sown the seeds of a future democracy, it was the discovery of gold that brought that plan to sudden maturity.

The immediate and cataclysmic effects of the gold discoveries are well known, and Eureka vies with the explorers as that part of our colonial history that has most captured the national imagination. But the enduring results of gold were to dominate our history for forty years to come.

In ten years from 1851 to 1861 the combined population of New South Wales and Victoria, the two gold colonies, rose from 264,588 to 891,182. This sudden inrush of people transformed the politics, the economy and the society of south-eastern Australia. Various though their social origins were, they included many of radical views in that age of factories and trade unions, of English Chartism and continental revolutions. By 1858, all four south-eastern colonies had adopted manhood suffrage and vote by ballot, and, checked

though this democracy might be by unequal electorates and propertied upper houses, its new masters proceeded to use it to right their grievances. Australia continued to ride on the sheep's back economically, but radical democracy was the swelling note of its politics in the second half of the century.

Their continuing grievances turned round their permanent employment as surface alluvial mining petered out. Most of them were absorbed somehow, supplying the needed services of swollen communities—building its roads and bridges, its dwellings and halls and courts of law, providing its teachers and doctors and lawyers, its traders and artisans, its clerks and its servants. In this age, Australian society was greatly diversified, in ways heralded before the gold rushes but more obvious after them. It was, for example, an era, not only of the lavish spending of the newly rich, but also one in which a thirst for culture was expressed in institutions—the first Australian universities and national art galleries, the public libraries and mechanics' institutes, these two latter so much in need now of a new lease of life.

The crude social gulfs of earlier times were being bridged. But the absorption of those who had been diggers, and of those who had lived on them, was difficult, nevertheless, and their demands for land and for the protection of local industry, so that they could find security as farmers or artisans, gave rise to struggles between big and little men that were the more bitter because the latter were now more numerous, better organized and more articulate.

Of course, people did not then, nor at any other time, act simply according to class, and the fight to unlock the lands was led by men of property like Robertson, himself a squatter.

But free-selection acts were opposed by propertied upper houses, and, their opposition at length defeated, the operation of these acts was fought with every means in their power by the squatters whose tenure of their runs was threatened. Neither squatter nor selector had a monopoly of misuse of the law, and the selector was defeated as much by nature as by his pastoralist opponents.

Most of the country was unsuited by climate for peasant farming, and commercial farming was out of the question away from the towns until extensive railway building had cheapened freights, inventions such as Ridley and Bull's stripper had cheapened costs, and research had bred drought-and rust-resisting wheats and shown the way to overcoming soil deficiencies. The number of farmers was increased by the land laws of the sixties, and the amount of land under cultivation, but not nearly so much as had been hoped and the great expansion of agriculture in Australia was not under way much before the eighties. Meanwhile, the wretched and lingering defeat of so many of the selectors in their long struggle with both land and squatters left a legacy of social hostility between squatters as a class and they and their next of kin, the shearers and bushworkers.

Throughout our colonial period, the harsh and evident gulfs between different social classes have been the dominant motifs of our history. That between gaoler and gaoled in the convict period was the harshest division of all, but as it gave way to divisions between pure merinos and emancipists, and then between wealthy masters, whatever their origins, and labouring classes, the gulf was but slenderly bridged before the gold rushes by the tiny middle group of farmers, retailers or independent artisans. There was a sense of this lack of a bridge between master and servant, rich and poor, in John Dunmore Lang's concern to bring in independent Scots mechanics and farmers, and, in part, Wakefield's theory of

systematic colonization aimed at the same defect in its preaching of closer agricultural settlement. Caroline Chisholm also devoted her life to lessening the harsh gaps in colonial society by bringing out "God's police", women and children, and by her schemes of closer settlement. Only in South Australia was the social gulf less evident, where the suitability of land near Adelaide for wheat growing and the early discovery of copper, introduced a greater variety into its society.

The gold rushes filled in the gap to some degree. Yet the bitter struggles over the land laws of the sixties underlined anew the old divisions of rich and poor, and the widespread use of condoned perjury and of the technicalities of the land laws, whether by squatters' "dummies" or by blackmailing pseudo-selectors, encouraged a renewed attitude of cynicism about the rule of law. The bitterness of the shearers' strikes in the early nineties owes much to the legacy of that earlier struggle, and the use of the power of government and a forgotten law to defeat and punish the unions encouraged a readiness to identify government with class interest that is unfavourable to the rule of law.

Something of this sort is true of all societies that are conscious of deep social division, and where all are for the party and none is for the State. It is true, too, of most colonial societies where the crude struggle for livelihood is more evident and the cement of social custom somewhat jarred by transport to strange conditions. Yet Australians are, by and large, a law-abiding people. For there has been much that has worked the other way. In time, the society has been filled out and grown more various, and its gulfs have been at least blurred. The constitutional way of doing things, that is part of the legacy of our background, has worked, however creakily and slowly, to the righting of grievances, and there have been numerous examples of the use of government and the law for really public ends in a country that has since the seventies been growing into a social-service state. And in this sparse continent, Australians have been forced to look to government for all sorts of services, so that the anarchic individualism of the American frontier has had little reflection here. Nevertheless, our belief in the rule of law is probably shallower-rooted than it is in England, and needs more careful nurturing. Any time of sharp division of public feeling will test that view.

The struggle of the sixties to unlock the lands had its parallel in the struggle between free-traders and protectionists in Victoria, the Upper House blocking the popular demand for a sheltering tariff-wall behind which native industry might grow and absorb Victoria's swollen numbers. Syme, protagonist of protection, thought of it as protecting not only industry but the industrial worker, and at this time there enters the Australian arena that idea of "a fair and reasonable" standard of living that became an axiom to which respect must be paid in all political controversy and social legislation.

This axiom was one of the bases of the White Australia policy that became a burning issue, in Australia as in the United States and Canada, with the coming of Chinese in large numbers to the goldfields, and strengthened at the end of the century by fears of the rise of Japan, developed into a national policy with the establishment of the Commonwealth. Mixed up with a good deal of ignorance and prejudice were two fundamental issues on which Australians have been as nearly agreed as a people ever is: first, that the immigration of people accustomed to great poverty should not be allowed to threaten the Australian ideal of a "fair and reasonable" standard of living, and second, that no immigration should be allowed that might radically alter the homogeneous character of the community and its common way of life. On the manner and detailed application of this policy there is much dispute; on its general purposes, there is agreement.

White Australia was, in its origins, the negative side of a developing Australian nationalism. This in its more positive form was fed by the increasing proportion of native-born and by the feverish expansion of the sixties and seventies and eighties. For those were the years of Australia Unlimited—the years of loan-fed railway-building and public works of all kinds, years that saw Australian pastures vastly extended, commercial farming quickened, and secondary industries growing apace.

Among Australian workers, now coming to be organized in urban and bush unions that ignored colonial boundaries, a stoutly nationalistic sentiment took on a millenarian fervour, expressed in glowing terms by their New Zealand-born prophet, William Lane, and reflected in the burgeoning of a native literature of which Furphy and Lawson were the enduring leaders. A land unsullied by the entrenched injustices of old Europe was their dream, a land awaiting its bridal day, when new visions of social justice and happiness should dawn. Not so long after Gavan Duffy, weary of political effort and yearning for Europe, had written, “We shall *not* create a new Arcadia in these pastoral lands, labour we ever so zealously”, Lane was beginning in the *Boomerang* and the *Worker* to preach the new day.

The exact shape of that vision varied, drawing elements from Henry George and Bellamy and even from Marx. Yet it was not so much doctrinal as a matter of attitude, of belief in a future in this southern continent in which a man’s birth would count less than the stuff that he was made of. But that fervid dream, for all its truth to human aspirations, rested on some weak supports. It was easy to believe in Australia Unlimited in the seventies and eighties, for loans continued to flow in to feed the expanding boom in all fields of livelihood, and, linked with the discovery of rich lodes of both precious and base metals at Mt Morgan in Queensland, Broken Hill in New South Wales, Mt Zeehan and Mt Lyell in Tasmania, Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie in Western Australia, concealed the danger to Australia of a world of falling prices. It took severe drought and depression in the nineties to teach the two related lessons, that Australia’s wealth was not unlimited, and that the mere facts of migration and antipodean distance did not free Australia from the “entrenched injustices” of the old world. The miraculously rapid development of Australian resources was a consequence of the Industrial Revolution and all that it implied, and Australians could not accept a civilization more or less ready-made and escape its problems.

As the eighties turned into the nineties, depression caught up with the Australian colonies, and with it a period of industrial strife without precedent in our history and covering all the major fields of work from wharf to inland sheep-station. Four years of strikes left the unions defeated and disillusioned, less ready for Utopian dreams and more ready to get down to the slow and detailed business of capturing political power. The reaction to defeat was the formation of political labour parties whose rapid rise to power had been long prepared by the spread of a democratic sentiment in the Australian colonies. To this sentiment they appealed with programmes designed to win the support, not only of unionists who were a minority of the workers, but also of non-unionists and radical middle-class people. Not until the new century did the Australian labour parties learn the discipline of the caucus that came to seem their distinctive feature, and that, as conscription showed, was always likely to break down should labour ranks be riven by fundamental disputes as to policy. But whatever the conflicts between those who preached caution and those who condemned it, these parties were in a position of advantage to appeal to ideals that were strongly rooted in the Australian people, ideals of a high standard of living, equality

of opportunity and political democracy. Indeed, to those ideals all Australian parties in their varying fashions pay respect.

The century's close saw the federation of the colonies in the Commonwealth of Australia. Federation had its enthusiastic supporters and its bitter opponents, but Australia was not swept into it on any wave of national enthusiasm. Indeed, the majority of Australians took no great interest in the matter. Yet their common characteristics and their common interests were stronger than their differences and jealousies. Governments, trade unions, and employers' associations had co-operated in many spheres, and Australians moved easily from colony to colony with little sense of difference. In the end, federation was achieved with difficulty in the absence of any sweeping enthusiasm for it, and was possible because the colonies were fundamentally alike in their ways of life.

In all, it was in a sober mood that Australians approached the new century. They were licking their wounds after the severest depression and the severest industrial strife in their history and a drought that had destroyed 50,000,000 sheep. Yet recovery was rapid and the new Commonwealth moved strongly into the industrial revolution that was to make Australia one of the highly industrialized countries of the world.

Even by 1891, industrial workers had grown as numerous as rural workers, though depression reversed this trend for a time and most industries were small and very domestic in the goods they made—farm implements and clothing, processed foods, beer, and gas for light and power. The twentieth century has seen very great developments from these simple beginnings. Industries have grown tremendously in variety and in size. Metallurgy and engineering, chemicals and glass, paper, rubber and a wide range of new industries have been added to the old. The heavy industries have grown largely as a by-product of the mining of base metals. Their growth was stimulated by the needs of war between 1914 and 1918 but was well under way before it. It was an event of major importance in our industrial history when the Broken Hill Proprietary Company's steel works went into production at Newcastle in 1915. The most recent phase has been the development of highly skilled precision industries. This also took stimulus from the needs of war, for World War II imposed heavier and more complex demands on Australian skills and resources than World War I had done. But the manufacture here of machine tools, optical glass and various products of precision engineering, including fighter aeroplanes, could not have been achieved without considerable pre-war development, both in the industries and in centres of scientific research—the universities, C.S.I.R. and the various technical institutions.

Australia's industrial revolution has greatly varied its society as well as its industries, and this increasing diversity is seen, too, in the growth of the "tertiary industries" that supply, not goods, but services. These range widely, from moving people from one place to another, to providing the community's spiritual, intellectual and artistic food. During this century, the proportion of Australians engaged as domestic servants has in general declined, but otherwise there has been a marked increase in the range and skill of services provided and in the proportion of our people providing them. Not least, the treasury of intellectual and artistic skills has been greatly enriched, a matter of vast importance in a country that must compensate in applied intelligence for its lack of numbers.

The Australian legend is still a bush legend, though the bulk of Australians are inescapably crowded into the wet margins of an arid continent, and two-thirds of them live in cities or towns. That legend, that is our imagination of ourselves, was formed in the days of expansive settlement and has been preserved by the proximity of the bush and the open

air habits of our climate. It is a good legend and preserves ideals that are worth preserving and carrying over into the new legend that urban industrial Australia will in time forge—the ideals of mateship and of an independent sort of equality.

But all was not simple progress. One of the major problems facing the new Commonwealth had been to decide between free trade and protection. In 1908, uneasy compromise gave way to all-out protection. The war of 1914-18 stimulated many mushroom industries that, when peace brought renewed competition from imports, swelled the cry for more and more protection. Protection did nurture local industry, but it raised costs, and the uneasy spiral of the twenties rose rapidly—more protection, higher costs of living, demands for higher wages, demands for still more protection to meet higher wage bills. But manufactured goods were an insignificant proportion of Australian exports, and overseas credits were gained almost entirely by the primary industries that made up 96 per cent of the value of exports in 1928. Not only were primary producers hit in all States, but those States such as Western Australia that had very little secondary industry seemed to be penalized as States. For them, protection was a cost of federation, and they were not convinced of any compensating gains.

World prices of Australia's exports, wool and wheat, meat and butter, fell drastically in 1929. The apparent national income was still further reduced by the cessation of overseas loans, and within three years 30 per cent of Australian employees were on the dole. The depression has left an enduring mark on Australian memories and on Australian policies. Today's policy of full employment is its child. Its cost in wretchedness was great. There were, however, some compensating gains. Inefficient industries went under and others learnt an increase in efficiency. The fall in overseas credits made it necessary for us to buy less from outside and to make more at home, and the long-run effect was to stimulate renewed industrial expansion, aided by lower costs after the crash of the inflated spiral of protection, prices and wages of the twenties.

The ending of this last war has brought new problems to Australian industry. Some of these are common to all highly industrialized countries in all post-war periods of inflated prices and of transition from manufacture for war to manufacture for peace, for it is easier to beat swords into ploughshares than to retool a factory to make refrigerators instead of shells. But there is also this special problem that the home market in a country of small population is too small to encourage the production in mass that might cheapen the cost of Australian industrial products and enable them to compete in world markets. Secondary industry is a large part of the nation's business, and it is varied and in many fields highly skilled, but any increase in its share of our exports will be slow.

Indeed, the experience of this half century is that the day of expansive settlement is giving way, for the most part, to conservation and more efficient use of known and limited resources. This applies equally to the land and to industry in which skill must balance both the costs of our belief in a fair and reasonable standard of living and the handicap of our small home market. All this requires a high standard of education, an adequate training of our native intelligence.

As our society has grown more complex, so it has required more complex government. This is the experience of all modern governments, but increase of government has been encouraged in Australia by much that is peculiarly Australian. Only governments, for example, could carry the cost of building railways in a land of long distances and sparse population. A large section of both Federal and State Government activity consists of social

services that reflect the axiom of all Australian political discussion, that it is a government duty to see that all sections of the community get a fair deal. During the nineties and the early part of this century, we earned a reputation, with New Zealand, as a laboratory of social experiment, and for a generation thereafter rested on the laurels of that reputation. Once again, active experiment in social services is with us, and is inevitably as much a subject of controversy as ever it was.

The most distinctive part of this social experimenting was the attempt to replace industrial strife by arbitration and conciliation. In this, there was not only the negative desire to avoid industrial strife, but also the positive desire to secure a fair distribution of the rewards of industry. In claiming arbitration as a "new province for law and order", Mr Justice Higgins argued that if you could relieve men of anxiety about their material welfare, you would "release infinite stores of human energy for higher efforts, for nobler ideals, when 'Body gets its sop, and holds its noise, and leaves soul free a little' ". Arbitration has not prevented industrial strife. It has probably reduced it and it has enabled wages to respond more quickly to changes in the cost of living. It is a practical attempt to put ideals into action, and a time of industrial unrest need not lead us to underestimate this attempt to extend the rule of law or to forget its further possibilities.

Arbitration is a function uneasily shared between Commonwealth and States. When Australians voted for the Commonwealth, they were concerned, not with the niceties of the Constitution, but simply with the question whether they should remain apart in separate colonies or join together in a federation. But the nature of the Constitution has proved very important indeed. The general intention was to reserve to the States all rights and duties not transferred to the Commonwealth. But in this new partnership, the Commonwealth was made permanently the richer partner, and power has followed the purse. Two wars and the general trend of judicial interpretation of the Constitution have hastened this process. Today, the States stand as poor relations on the Commonwealth's doorstep, and poor relations rarely have the ordering of the household in their power. In turn, the comparative affluence of the Commonwealth has brought on it all sorts of pressures to embark on fields of public activity that require money but that are not envisaged as Commonwealth functions. On the other hand, the Constitution has limited the power of the Commonwealth in all sorts of irksome ways. One of the major political problems facing us today is to evolve a way out of the present complexity of Commonwealth-State relations that may allow effective government while preserving the delegation and decentralizing of authority to which on the whole citizens are more attached than governments.

This land of ours is in geography an appendage to Asia, in civilization an outpost of Europe. In the nineteenth century, we were able to go on building a European way of life with little thought of our place on the earth's surface. We became conscious of Asia only as a source of immigrants whose unrestricted inflow might undermine our attempts to build up a homogeneous community based on the British constitutional tradition and our own ideal of a high standard of living. In this century, we have been compelled to go much further in recognizing that we are separated by the dividing oceans of the world from Europe and America, and tied by a string of islands to Asia. If we had tried to forget this, Pearl Harbour and Singapore and the Kokoda Trail brought it home to us.

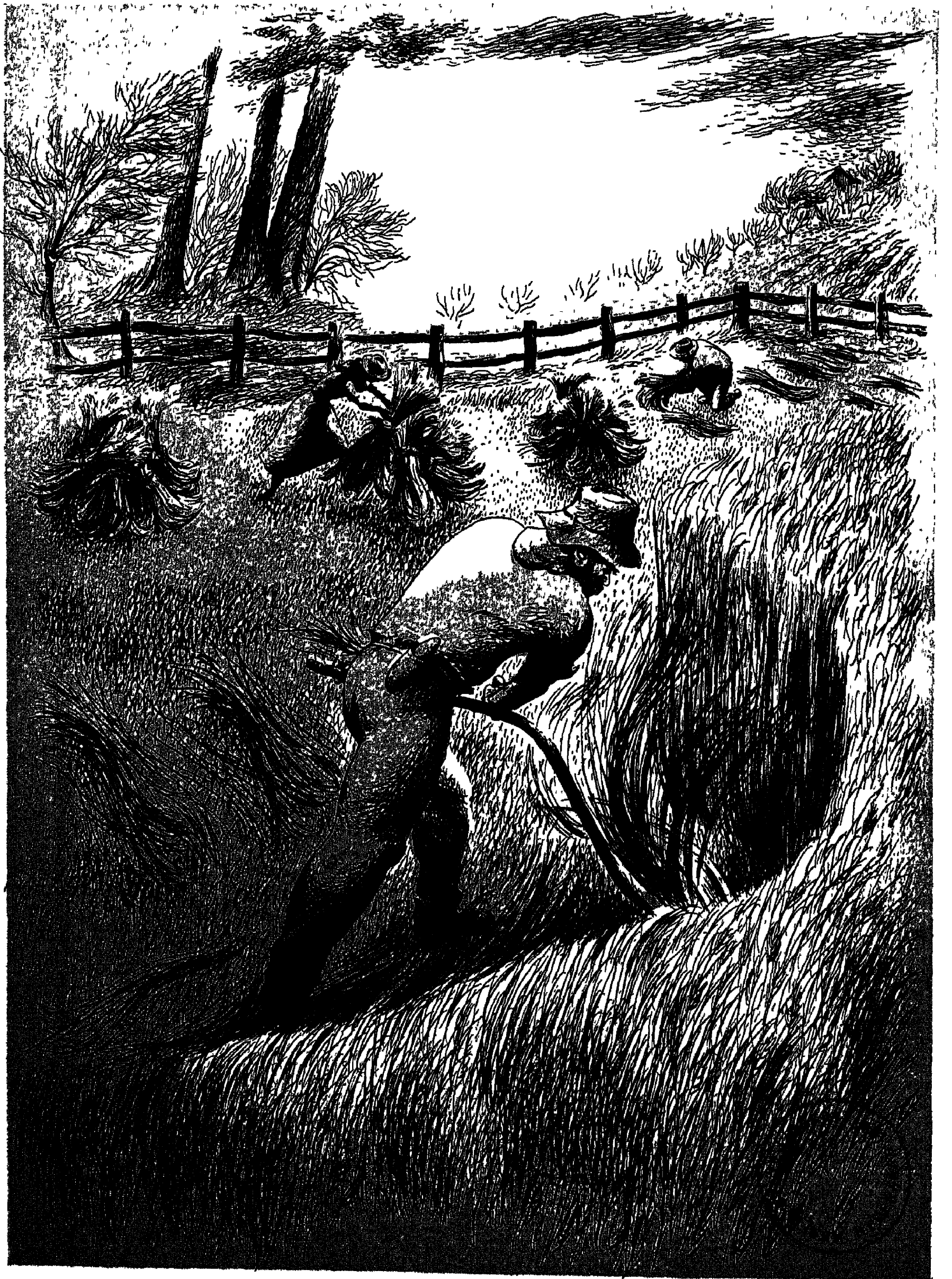
The contrasts are sharp. We have a small population close by the crowded populations of Asia. We have a high standard of living close by some of the most wretched poverty in the world. We have a large, seemingly empty country, and, though we may increase our

numbers, there is no sober prospect of filling it with a numerous European population in the near future.

In some respects, these contrasts are deceptive. Our island continent is largely arid and cannot carry unlimited numbers of people. Nor would emigration even palliate Asia's population problem, the solution of which must depend on the growth in Asia of industries and of ability to purchase its needs in food. But these contrasts remain dangerous, for we must expect an era of instability in Asia to which we cannot remain indifferent. We can no longer shut our eyes to Asia; we have to take part in its affairs. If we are to do so constructively, we will need to excel, as other small nations have excelled, in intelligence. No effort and no expenditure that raises the level of intelligent understanding in this small and exposed community will be extravagant.

The dominant characteristics of natural Australian scenery are greyness, age, loneliness, stillness and, above all, peace. Rome, Greece, Egypt, Babylon, are of yesterday compared with the age-long sameness of our great silent continent. The deserts of Arabia have seen the passing of Aryan hosts, the wildernesses of Central America were trampled down by the armoured Spaniards, but the lonely plains of Australia had known only the little wandering tribes of blacks and the gentle kangaroo, till the Japanese bombs began to fall on our northern coasts; the turmoil of history had passed this land by. Before ever the mushroom growth of the human race had sprung up, countless millions of suns had arisen, shone upon the great desert disc of the interior, just as it is today, and sunk in a blaze of red.

C. T. Madigan: *Central Australia* (Georgian House).



THE ROAD

NO

WESTGATE

A SHORT STORY

by Frank Dalby Davison

ENGINEERS HAVE BUILT a new road up the Plenty Ranges to Westgate—or Tommy's Hut, as we used to call it.

The new road is a modern mountain highway, a black stream of bitumen that loops and sidles along the flank of the range, with pointed bends in the shadowed gullies, and scenic sweeps around the sunny shoulders of the spurs. There are white posts marking the outer edges of the curves, and smooth, purposeful embankments. The bush is tall and dense.

The old road was different—unsurfaced earth, a pioneer track, broadened and graded within the limited resources of a rural shire. Its course had been determined by that axiom of simple bushmanship, "To get through the ranges stick to the tops of the ridges."

The roadside timber was different from that which shades the new road. The thin soil of the

ridges ran to no opulence of leafage, only to grey messmate trees, with bare gravel and rocky outcrops between, and a few tufts of grey wiregrass. Here was no birdsong, no undergrowth, no ground life. It was a lean, spare bush; life clung to these bony heights only by drawing in on itself; you imagined that the putting forth of a new leaf would be a matter affecting deep issues, and notable in an uneventful calendar.

"The old road up the range should begin about half a mile farther on," I said almost anxiously as we came under the foothills, and "Yes, there it is," as it came into sight.

John must have caught the note in my voice. "We'll have a look-see," he said, and shortly after turned on to the gravel. A hundred yards farther on he slipped into second gear, and we purred steadily up the spur where the mountain

Note : Reprinted from the *Bulletin* of 20 December, 1944

settlers' horses had once won their way toilsomely.

Near the top of the rise—by the kindness of Melbourne friends I was on my way to revisit Tommy's Hut after many years and much wandering—we passed the spot where a loaded cart had once gone hurtling backward down the right-hand declivity.

It had happened at eleven at night, and we had been trying to get up the range with a horse weary from the day's journey from the city. A chock thrown under the wheel must have been a clod of clay and not a rock as was intended, for the cart ran back. "Chock! For God's sake, chock!" The driver's cry had panic in it. There was a frantic scraping of hooves as the horse struggled to regain control. Then horse and cart disappeared into the night. Out of the dark came the thump of something overturning, and a bang and clatter as the dislodged load shot off and avalanched down the hill. Then the groan of a horse, followed by sounds of ineffectual plunging. Then silence again.

It was chill dawn before we had extricated the horse from under the cart, got the cart back on to the road, collected our scattered goods, reloaded, and—shaken and hollow-eyed—were again on our way. A shaft of the cart, lodging against a stump, had stood prop against complete disaster.

We saw now a couple of recent cartwheel marks on the road before us—firewood cutters, most likely—then these disappeared among trees and we realized that the old road was quite abandoned. As well as being deeply channelled by past rains, it was littered with fallen timber—a lace of twigs, leaves, great branches, an occasional whole tree—brought down by the winds in the years since it was last used by the settlers. The side-tracks which had led to the settlers' homes were abandoned, the moss deep in the old wheel-ruts.

As we passed the old side-tracks I named them from memory: "Glendenning's Turn-off," "Cummins's Turn-off," "Jamieson's Turn-off."

It was White's Turn-off I was looking for, and Sims's selection, where I had first put down roots in the earth.

Arthur Sims was from the Old Country, a Man of Kent, who had spent the better part of a lifetime in Australia—or the Colonies, to use the term he employed with a slight air of patronage—bringing up a large family by dint of heavy toil until, in his late fifties, he had found himself

with enough money to make a small start for himself on the land; a dream that had stalked his thoughts for years, growing more insistent as the time before him shortened. I was the boy about the place, wide-eyed and with a mind as receptive as the soil.

The family, in addition to Mr and Mrs Sims, comprised two daughters and three sons. There was Jessie, aged about fourteen, in her last year at school, strong-limbed, blue-eyed and as blonde as new rope; imbued with something more than a tomboy interest in every aspect of the outdoor life of the selection. We were friends, and even acknowledged sweethearts after the day when we exchanged, in the twilight of the barn, the startling kiss of adolescence.

Annie, aged sixteen, a buxom girl with smooth honey-coloured hair parted in a white line up the centre of her head, was one to whom the four walls of a dwelling were in the nature of a cocoon. She was the protectress and student-observer of our attachment.

The sons—Ernie, who was before my time, Harry, who came after my arrival, and whose going overlapped Charlie's arrival and preceded my own departure—were a special feature of the place. They came in their turn from their wanderings far and wide to toil awhile shoulder to shoulder with the old man. Here was a home-life and Mum and Dad. Here was sonly duty. Here was the fashioning of a hearth, a man working for himself and not for a boss. Here was effort with which they could identify themselves, until the calls that young men answer drew them off.

Harry, the one I came to know best, was twenty-four, sober to the point of dourness, hard-working and with a pride in past feats of labour on the ballast trucks of railway construction camps.

Mrs Sims I remembered only as a smallish dark figure ever hurrying about some household task, someone whose kindness I took as much for granted as I had taken my own mother's.

Mr Sims was a man of medium physique and courageous countenance. Under a bald head fringed with greying curls he had fine blue-grey eyes in a bronzed face, a straight nose and a good mouth showing between moustache and grizzled beard. Hard work had affected him. His gait was stiff-kneed and he walked with drooping shoulders and dangling hands.

He had a habit—perhaps it was the Kentish

accent—of drawling and distorting certain vowels. In his mouth “yes” became “yuurce”, and “year” “yuur”. He had a melodious voice and in his lighter moments would pause in his work to troll a line of song, most often “I’ll Be a Jolly Pedlar and Around the World I’ll Roam”.

In bed he wore a night cap. I saw him in it once when, after going to bed, he returned to the living-room for something he had forgotten. I had never seen a nightcap, and, in combination with whiskers and night-clothes, the sight overwhelmed me. I think my astonished stare embarrassed him a little, an embarrassment he sought to turn to humorous account with a large wink before darting from view.

He was not one to take part in evening activities. After tea he would scratch his beard a little while washing-up was in progress, then remove his boots and, carrying them, depart stocking-foot to his room at the opposite end of the small dwelling. Sometimes he would take with him a large seedsman’s catalogue, the only book I ever saw in his hands, to read for a few minutes in bed before putting out the light. On these occasions—much to the annoyance of us young ones—he would interrupt the elementary card game or snakes-and-ladders which followed washing-up by communicating the results of his study in a voice that carried clearly through the hessian partitions.

“Jessie! Annie! Are you thuure?”

“Yes, Dad.”

“I think I’ll plant ’taters between the Jonathans, where we had the beans last yuur.”

Silence from the players absorbed with their game.

“Jessie! Annie! Do you huur me?”

“Yes, Dad.”

Another silence.

“Jessie! Annie! Are you thuure?”

A resigned voice “Yes, Dad.”

“It says here Giant Maincrop is the thing for cool climates and heavy soils, but I don’t care for ’em. I think I’ll plant Early Miracle, same as I did yuur afore last.”

Silence, accompanied by glances of exasperation between the players.

“Jessie! Annie! Do you huur me?”

“Ye-e-e-s! Of course we can hear you!” And mumblingly, “Worse luck!”

Mr Sims had little time even for reading his seedsman’s catalogue. In his reckoning when it was too dark for work it was time for sleep.

In this he was something of a household tyrant. Soon after we heard the seedsman’s catalogue flop on the floor we would hear his voice inquiring whether we were ever going to bed, and expressing surprise that we still had the lamp burning. These words, addressed ostensibly to the younger members of his household, were perhaps also by way of tactful intimation to his spouse—Lucy—that it was time she laid aside her darning and joined him in sleep.

He would wear us down in the end, and we would break up reluctantly, the girls to their room adjoining the living-room and I to my bunk in a little room at the end of the barn, there to be companioned before falling asleep by the munching of the horse in his stable at the other end of the building, the occasional rattle of the watchdog’s chain, the spooky call of a mopoke or the complaining bark of a fox in the nearby bush.

Mr Sims had selected a hundred acres on the edge of the big timber country; heavily forested land, some of the trees as thick through at the butt as the length of a couple of axe-handles.

My arrival was in the fourth year when, a little at a time, ten acres had been cleared, ploughed and planted with fruit-trees, and a house and barn built. But clearing was still going on at the edge of the bush in the intervals between caring for the young orchard, so I came to know what it meant to uproot the living forest with the aid of a few small tools, and make it vanish back to the elements.

It took upwards of half a week of sweat and hard breathing with mattock, shovel and axe to grub and fell one of those trees. It went over like grandeur undone, crashed to earth with terrible and dusty impact, and lay dramatically inert. The severed roots of the stump were cocked up as high as a man’s head; you could have buried a dray in the hole you had dug; and two men could see each other only from the midriff up across its prone trunk. The trunk had to be sawn through in several places, the branches lopped and cut into manageable lengths, the stump end rolled clear of the hole, and the logs swung round and piled for burning—main strength and the craft of pole and lifting-jack pitted against earth’s tenacious clutch of her own.

The fires had to be stoked for weeks on end, as well as being shaken down—spark fountains leaping in the dark—each night before you went to bed. Every chip from the axe, stick

and fragment of wood, had to be stooped for and fed in armfuls to the fires. While the burning went on—and that was just one tree—the buttress roots remaining in the ground had to be traced and uncovered to below plough depth, and cut through in several places, and torn from their moorings in the subsoil, and lifted and cast on the fires, and the heavy clay returned, shovelful by shovelful, to the holes from which stump and root had come. From all this you got some idea of how much had been done since the day Mr Sims and Ernie had pitched their tent in the forest and made a start.

When he paused for a breather or a strengthening snack it was Mr Sims's habit to sit facing the young orchard, fondling his beard and heartening himself in present labour with the thought of labour done. At such moments he was prone to live past struggles over so fully as to forget that another son now toiled beside him.

"Ernie, d'you mind that whopping big gum that stood right where the end of that row of Ribstone Pippins is now?" he would say, turning round. "Oh, it's you, Harry! Well, Ernie looked up at that tree and he said to me 'Dad,' he said, 'we won't get the best of this inside a twelvemonth!' Man, he was a big 'un!" Here Mr Sims paused to dwell in thought on the size of the branching giant that had been vanquished, and to give us time to imagine its proportions. "But we got rid of him!" he added in triumphant recollection. "By frawst, we did!"

In addition to the living trees there were the stumps of the dead to be dug and wrenched piecemeal from the earth and piled for burning, and the striving horde of saplings to be worried loose with mattock and axe one by one and gathered up to the fires, and the ground raked clean of everything that might foul the tillage. It was Mr Sims's pride that there should be no by-passed stumps in the cultivation, no forest litter to sour the soil, no hidden root to snub the flow of the plough.

When at last the acre marked was cleared it looked strangely tidy, like a schoolyard on a Saturday morning, only that it was criss-crossed with red and white bars where the log fires had been.

There were only light cultivation tools on the selection, so a man had to be brought from a distant place with a heavy plough and three big horses to break up the ground; and

the cold, heavy earth gave to his mould-board with unwilling groans and the explosive snapping of small roots, and the yellow-grey furrows lay over against each other as hard and unyielding as paving slabs. It was left to lie like that, to weather, while we shifted the fence to include the new cultivation. Then the sods were ready to break down and must be ploughed and harrowed and rolled and ploughed and harrowed again and made up into banked lands before the little fruit trees were set out in their sedate rows.

Mr Sims aspired to create on his selection the Kentish garden of his youthful recollections, and his orchard was a picture of careful tillage. Just as the company of well-bred people gives you the feeling "Here is gentleness" or a library the feeling "Here is learning", so when you came to Mr Sims's place you had the feeling "Here is husbandry". I felt it myself when first I entered the gate, though I had no word for it.

The tall young apple-trees to the right as you went down the lane leading to the house were as straight in their latticed rows as if they had been set out by some exact machine; and there were no ragged headlands or weedy corners; ground that couldn't be reached with the plough was turned by the spade, right up to the fence posts.

Between the apple-trees, in their rows, gooseberry bushes were growing, two at equal distances between each tree, and between the rows of apple-trees there were rows of vegetables.

On the left-hand side there were two acres of raspberry plants, the canes supported, not as was the local custom, by stakes driven through the crown of the plants, but by being trained on wire fencing stretched taut along the rows. The fork-dug ground was free from so much as a single leaf of weed or sorrel. The lane itself was fenced from the cultivation, and the strip on each side of the cart track sown with grass—a bit of Saturday-afternoon grazing for the horse.

The house comprised three rooms in a row, light and cheap in construction, but comfortable. The barn, built of slabs, was model, the subject of approving comment from all callers.

To the right, below the barn, was the second-year planting of young trees, standing in a catch-crop of red clover; and to the left, below the lane that led across the bottom of the raspberry patch to the bush paddock, was

the third-year planting of fruit trees—pronged sticks, merely—standing in a catch-crop of rye, just greening the ground.

Mr Sims lived in two worlds, that of his present labour and that of his early recollections, and they wove in and out of his thoughts as he worked, each the inspiration of the other. He would pause sometimes in the midst of work—when a breathing spell was reasonably indicated—to speak of the past; or would be very easily stimulated by question or comment to point the difference between Old Country and local methods, even to his own disparagement.

I commented once on the straightness of a furrow he had just turned in, starting the winter ploughing-out in the four-year-old orchard.

“Straight!” said he. “Oh, no, boy! That’s as crooked as a dog’s hind leg!”

He paused to give time for this correction to sink in, looking at me the while with eyes that dared me to point out that his furrow really was straight except for a very small wobble half-way along. Then followed an explanation of how ploughing was done in Kent, and not, mind you, just in a two-acre patch, but a furrow drawn the length of one side of a twenty-acre field. The ploughman would be expected to cut his furrow as straight as a stretched string and with the turned earth lying over as smooth as if it had been trowelled, from end to end! He was no ploughman if he couldn’t!

It was the same with almost everything about the place which I found reason to admire. It might be good enough in its way—and he was grateful in so far as he might accept my words as a compliment to a man who was doing his best under adverse conditions—but it was always about three jumps behind Kent.

“Yuurce! Yuurce!” he would say after telling me about the thatching, the stabling, the hop-picking or the milking byres of Kent, and stare into the distance a while from his blue-grey eyes before turning back to his task.

I came to regard Kent as a sort of fabled country, something to look back on much as the people of the Dark Ages must have looked back on the fabled days of Roman order, so that I was a little surprised and disconcerted to note that Harry was not always at one with his father in reverential regard for Kentish ways.

I noticed it first when the winter pruning of the four-year-old apple-trees was under way. Mr Sims had not changed his ideas of pruning during his years abroad, while Harry had

absorbed some of the ideas of his own country. In most things about the farm he honoured his father’s superior knowledge, but in the matter of pruning he felt that Mr Sims had something new to learn, and that he must make a stand. They argued the matter while they worked, and the sound of their dispute came down from among the twiggy trees. Neither would yield, and, as they worked facing each other, one side of each row of trees was pruned in Kent, so to speak, and the other side at Tommy’s Hut.

Notwithstanding this significant clash, I continued to accept the fable—it was a happy one—and my acceptance stimulated Mr Sims in his own belief in it, even to sentimentalizing it to a point which led him into a rather shattering encounter with his son.

One day, following a recent talk by him on the splendid spectacle of huntsmen riding to hounds, and of the generosity of the Kentish gentry at Yuletide, he came to me with a very happy glint in his eyes, the glint of one who had inadvertently stumbled upon evidence substantiating a theme. He was carrying a folded sheet of paper, which it happened I had seen before, and which I knew had reached the homestead wrapped round some groceries. He unfolded it and held it before me. It was from an English illustrated paper, and on the page facing me were rows of photographs of rural gentlemen in hunting garb, shooting rigouts and velvet jackets.

“Now, boy!” exclaimed Mr Sims, beaming at me over the top of the page like a benign but expectant schoolmaster, and quite expecting me to recall our earlier conversation. “Now, boy! If I were to ask you which of these men was a typical dee-ar old English country gentleman which would you say?”

He had overlooked the nearby presence of Harry. Harry snorted as if his tonsils had exploded. “Dee-ar old English country gentleman!” he repeated in drawling mimicry.

Mr Sims bent on him a look of mingled embarrassment and reproach before thrusting the sheet into my hands and darting off.

It was not in the mind of Mr Sims alone that thoughts of the fabled land of Kent wove in and out of the realities of the moment. His stories set up the same habit with me, and one day I asked him a question which I had been pondering for some time, and which drew an enlightening answer.

"Mr Sims, why did you leave Kent?"

My question fetched from Harry a deep belly-chuckle which ended in a ringing laugh and, although it had been asked in all innocence, drew upon me a shrewd look from both men. Mr Sims seemed to feel that I had challenged him, so, while Harry listened, grinning, he explained.

"Well, boy, seeing that you've asked me, I'll tell you!"

And then followed an explanation in which I learnt that while Kent was a very beautiful and wonderful place—"the finest county in all England, I've heard say"—it was a place in which everything was owned by someone, pretty well down to the last minnow in the brook, and the people who owned it, and had owned it "for hundreds and hundreds of yuurs", were very jealous of their rights. If the farm steward saw me eating as much as one raspberry unbidden by him he might lay his whip about my legs; and if my father took some faggots from the woods for firing and the steward came to know of it he might be brought before the "magistr'te" and be turned off the place. The "magistr'te" would be a friend of his master and a neighbouring squire.

There slowly faded from Mr Sims's face the somewhat dramatic expression with which he had made me this explanation, and he looked long into the distance while Harry lit a pipe and looked at me with an ironic smile about his mouth. Mr Sims said "Yuurce, yuurce"; and we bent again to our digging, and to our several trains of thought.

From then on Mr Sims spoke to me of Kent in the tone of one speaking to another who is in the know, but I think he was anxious lest I should think too badly of his home country, because a few days later, when we were hilling-up the potatoes in the top orchard, he interrupted work to tell a few yarns of the great larks they used to get up to in the Old Dart. When we reached the headland he put his hoe on his shoulder and—to Harry's amusement and my vast delight—did a few steps of a village breakdown.

It was at about this time that I began to understand something of the chances governing Mr Sims's hopes of success in his enterprise.

I came from the house one raw winter evening to get some wood for the stove just as he—last home from the field of toil—was stumping up from the barn. I heard his foot-

steps cease at the gate, and glanced up. He stood there a while looking back through the murk at the lower cultivation, and then he spoke, half to himself and half as if he had become aware of a listener. "Yuurce, yuurce," he said, "we'll have the living comin' in in a couple more yuurs."

Then he turned and stumped on toward the lighted kitchen.

It was the first time I really became aware that the living was not yet coming in. The way he spoke, as if reassuring himself, made me wonder whether—despite that it would be impossible for him, of his nature, to slum any kind of work—there was not a measure of desperation behind the fine state of cultivation in which his orchard was kept.

People round about were not doing very well. The cold, clayey soil just didn't seem sufficiently responsive to cultivation; crops seemed, as a rule, uncertain, and orchard trees, as a rule, seemed to run more to wood than to fruit. I had come to understand, from the tenor of Mr Sims's observations, that the indifferent success which was being met by his neighbours was due in some part to slack methods, and that good methods would prevail over disadvantages of soil and climate. That was the farmer's justification.

But then there was the afternoon when, returning by a short cut through the bush from meeting the storekeeper's wagon on the road, I saw Mr Sims standing on the headland below the barn, facing the crop of red clover, and I climbed through the fence and joined him.

"That clover's not doing very well," he said.

The clover looked well enough from a distance, but when you came to look at it closely it was very sparse, with a lot of bare ground between the plants.

He left me and walked into the middle of it and looked about him, and stood for a long while in thought. I saw that he had forgotten me and was deep in a problem. When he came back he was almost up to me before he looked at me with a slight widening of the eyes which showed he had just recalled my presence.

We stood together for a moment or two, looking at the clover; then he said quietly, "We'll start to plough that in in the morning. I'll try something else—swedes, probably."

And you could tell from his tones that in the minutes while I had watched him standing

alone in the middle of his unsuccessful crop of clover one hope had been courageously abandoned and another, with equal courage, taken up in its place.

I began to understand that in the affairs of the selection too much depended on too little for comfort of mind. The failure or success of this or that small cropping venture made a difference in immediate living prospects. Hard work had anxiety for its invisible team-mate. No jollity accompanied the ploughing-in of the clover and sowing of the swedes.

Nor was there any margin to cover loss by disaster. There was the time when we were driving down the range in the wagon to the railway and Billy, the creaky old horse-of-all-work, slipped and fell and knocked the wind out of himself and couldn't get up. Mr Sims was the first to scramble from the wagon and rush to kneel at his head. It seemed for a minute as if the horse had broken his leg and would have to be destroyed. Mr Sims had great difficulty in controlling his feelings. He made a funny noise. He seemed for a moment to shrink in bodily size, and the hand that rested on Billy's head was shaking.

When we had got Billy up and were driving on again I sat very quiet, not saying anything to Mr Sims for fear talk might be unwelcome at the moment. I just sat there watching the trees move past, rather frightened at discovering that accident could rip away the surface of things and show the works underneath. It seemed to be my first glimpse of works.

It was all right on the drive home from the railway. Mr Sims had enjoyed the glass of beer he always drank on his rare visits to the township, and he had had some pleasant conversation with people he met in the store—as well as a day sitting in the wagon instead of working himself to death. While we were jogging back over the level road between the rail and the foot of the range he talked about things on the selection, what good growth the young apple-trees had made since the day they were planted, how healthy the raspberry canes looked and about the fowls coming on to lay very soon.

He sang a bit of "I'll be a Jolly Pedlar and Around the World I'll Roam"; and when we came to the place on the mountain road where Billy had fallen down he didn't seem to notice; he just slapped Billy's back with the reins in a friendly way.

Things went up and down like that, and it was not always a matter of whether they were up or down in themselves, but to some extent a matter of how you were feeling in yourself.

There was the day Mr Sims came along just when I had finished cleaning out Billy's stable and stacking the manure neatly on the heap outside the stable door. He stopped very kindly to give me a word of praise for the thorough way I did the job; which really wasn't deserved, because to me old Billy was all the grand horses in the world, and I just enjoyed fixing things up comfortably for him. I was even pleased with what he left on the stable floor for me to clean up, and I said to Mr Sims, "That's a fine lot of manure we've got now."

Mr Sims said, "Boy, that's only a spoonful! That'll go nowhere!" And then followed a tale of the manuring of Kentish fields. Now, in addition to the manure of byre and stable, cartloads of fish would be brought from the nearby markets in time of glut and ploughed in; and after a storm at sea the wagons would go down to the beaches and come back loaded with seaweed to be spread on the fields.

Mr Sims stood looking out over his own acres, and I saw that hope was at a low ebb. Perhaps he was tired, and perhaps he was thinking of the clover that had failed. "That land 'ad been tilled and manured for hundreds and hundreds of yuurs," he said. "And that's just the difference!" He kicked a clod and watched it burst into dust.

I wondered if Kentish fields had not been better soil to begin with; wondered, in fact, if he had not selected unwisely.

The same thought must have been running through his own head—and possibly was no newcomer—for he said, as if in answer to my speculation, "Perhaps I did wrong in coming to this part of the country."

He asked me then why I didn't work in the city and grow up to sit at a desk and wear a coat and be a gentleman, and I had difficulty in making my preference for cleaning out stables and splitting fence posts sound very sensible.

The good sense of my preferences was linked in a certain way with his moods, and I was reassured to notice that the moments when he seemed to wonder if his hopes were hollow didn't last. He went on working just the same, and presently the beginning of some new job would indicate that he had forgotten his doubts.

It was only a couple of days after our talk that we started digging the well he had been planning for some time. I noticed later that the successful completion of one job seemed always to set his mind busy with plans for the future. When we were finishing off the well—shovelling away the spoil from around the top—he fell to talking of the nice pastures, in place of the rough grazing of the bush paddock, he hoped to have for the livestock “by and by”.

The swedes came up nicely, but a few months later the weather dealt Mr Sims a heavy blow. It was the only occasion on which I heard him driven by excess of feeling to lay his troubles at the door of a malignant fate.

The part of the range where the selection lay jutted to the south and was sometimes swept by unseasonable hail. One of these storms came over in early spring, just when the raspberry blossoms were setting to fruit.

I was bringing the two milking cows home from the bush one afternoon when the sky darkened, and by the time we were in the lane leading from the bush paddock to the barn the hail was dancing off the cows’ backs and was getting heavier. I made a bolt for the house with face screwed up against the stinging pellets, and arrived at the gate just in time to run into Annie and Jessie, who had been across the road to visit a neighbour. We raced pell-mell for the shelter of the veranda and reached there breathless, laughing and shouting.

It was a wonderful hailstorm; the iron roof roared under it. You couldn’t see fifty yards from the veranda. The ground whitened with hail while you watched.

We stood admiring the transformation, pointing out the big fellows—like pigeons’ eggs—and exclaiming over the way the hail danced back from the veranda ledge. We hadn’t thought of it knocking every blossom from the raspberry canes.

Just then we saw Mr Sims coming towards the house from down by the lower cultivation. He wasn’t running. Indifferent to the pelting hail, he was walking more heavily than usual, and his shoulders were more drooped. We remembered the raspberry canes then. Our voices were hushed and our eyes fixed on him.

Within a few yards of the veranda he stopped and lifted a haggard face and a clenched fist to the sky and shouted, “Send it down! Send it down!”

His wife gasped in the doorway. “Oh,

Arthur,” she cried, “you shouldn’t speak like that!” And drew back into the shadows of the kitchen.

Mr Sims shouldered past us to the end of the veranda and stood looking out, his hands clutching the rail. His face was no longer tan, but ashen. He turned and spoke as if he felt his outburst demanded justification.

“That’s a yuur’s work gone in less than two minutes!” he said, and turned grimly to watch the hail again.

We were silent. His arms, from shoulder to the hands gripping the veranda, were shaking. He spoke again. “And half the next yuur’s livin’ gone with it!”

Soon afterwards he slumped down on the slab wash-bench and was lost from us in unhopeful reckoning and bleak meditation.

The storm passed shortly after. The air cleared and all the earth was white. The trunks of the trees in the bush paddock looked like charcoal marks on paper. Then the sun shone forth, and all the world sparkled like fairyland. But we could take no delight in it. The farmer’s loss was heavy on us. It seemed as if all his hope lay under a shroud of bright ice.

You’d have thought a blow like that would have sunk Mr Sims for ever, but he came right side up again. Perhaps despondency was a luxury beyond his means.

At any rate, within a few days we had begun work—“to take advantage of the cool weather”—on a new bit of clearing.

It was in the following weeks that I learnt what it meant to uproot and destroy the forest. It was during the later part of those weeks, too, that I heard Mr Sims, as if misfortune and disaster were unheard things, recalling with satisfaction the epic days when he and Ernie began in the virgin bush.

The tide was on the turn while we grubbed and burnt the trees, and there came a Sunday morning in middle spring when it seemed as if soil and season were conspiring to encourage the farmer in his best hopes.

Sunday morning on the selection was a time when you had the world in repose and, therefore, in condition for stock-taking. You couldn’t work on Sunday, but you could walk about at ease and see how things were getting on. You could look back over the work you had been doing and plan what you were going to do next week. You might end up raking the fowl-yard, but that wasn’t really work; that was just

making the fowls comfortable and putting in a half-hour while waiting for dinner.

My own Sunday morning was generally taken up with a prowl down the fern gully which led off from near the back of the house, there to commune with the boles of the aloof gums, with running waters, and to disturb the peace of a wombat whose burrow I had discovered; afterwards, perhaps, to return to wait about the kitchen in hope of a kiss from Jessie when her mother was out of the room.

On some Sundays, however, Mr Sims would indicate a liking for my company on his tour of the farm, and we would go off something like Page and Good King Wenceslas.

This occasion in mid-spring proved a very hopeful morning. The pods of the early peas had swelled nicely and would soon be ready for picking, while there was a good show of blossom on the later sowing.

It was only the kitchen garden, of course, but success here indicated something which might be done in a larger way for market. There had been plentiful rain followed by tempered warmth—good growing weather—and wherever you looked tomatoes, pumpkins, radishes, were going for their lives.

In the larger world of the market crops the swedes which had replaced the red clover were making good headway. "If the blight don't get at them," said Mr Sims, and stooped and turned up a few leaves, only to find them comfortingly clean and healthy-looking.

In the top orchard the gooseberry bushes were thick with little goosegogs. There weren't many gooseberry bushes, of course. They had just been planted between the apple-trees as an afterthought, and their promise didn't compensate for the loss of the raspberry crop; but still, it was cheering to see them thriving, and the jam made from them would cut down the grocery bill.

There were some apples, too, on the young four-year-old trees; not a great number; the upper branches were rather bare; but halfway up from the fork there was quite a showing. With careful brown hands Mr Sims turned back the leaves to reveal the green fruit marked with faint bars of pink.

He mentioned that there had been some apples last year, a few bucketfuls—all that could be expected from three-year-old trees. "And excellent apples, boy!" he exclaimed, looking up at me.

I had thought apples were just apples.

"Oh, excellent apples!" he repeated, seeing that I had failed of being properly impressed. "I've never seen better in my life!"

No mention of Kent! The omission seemed almost deliberate. Those last-year apples instantly loomed in my mind as large as coconuts, and I stooped to look at those his hands were revealing, convinced that they were fruit of very notable promise.

Mr Sims stopped at the top of the orchard and looked back at the trees. "Yuurce," he said, in confident and happy anticipation, "We'll have some cases of apples to sell this yuur!"

The raspberry plantation didn't interest us much that morning. We viewed it briefly from over the fence which separated it from the lane. Mr Sims remarked, "We might have better luck next yuur"; but there was some doubt in his voice, and some distaste in the glance he bent on the flourishing but fruitless canes. Hope had received a cruel blow, and it was clear from the way he spoke that the future of the raspberries rested with themselves.

The rye, below the raspberries, was more inviting to look at—and we could see it from where we stood—now going on for two feet high, a fine dark green, and dense, like a soft pile. Here waved the true banner of hope.

That rye was a great source of pride and satisfaction to Mr Sims during the last weeks of its growth.

It was a hay crop, for the comfort and sustenance of the horse and cows during the winter, when the picking would be lean in the bush paddock and the nights frosty. It stood for the future of animal husbandry on the selection, and was of a piece with the projected pasture paddocks.

When we passed along the lane at noon or evening, during the warming weather when we were at the grubbing and burning-off, Mr Sims would often lag behind on the headland to enjoy the sight of his prospering crop, dark—like wheat—and full of a sappy fragrance. The wind blowing across it made catspaws of silver-grey, and the leaves rustled as if they were talking together.

On a Sunday morning, when there was a twinkle of heat in the air and the seedheads were beginning to make their appearance in the rye, Mr Sims took down his scythe from its peg on the wall of the toolshed and wiped

off the grease which had protected the blade during the winter. He referred back to Kent, of course, saying that he supposed that they had reapers and binders now, at any rate, on the bigger farms, but in his day the grain was cut by scythemen, working as many as ten and twelve in line. Then he went out in front of the barn and had two or three practice swings to make sure that hand and eye were still in trim.

When the clearing was finished the next job in the developmental scheme was the splitting of posts in the bush for the new fencing. But the season was advancing and the rye harvest was in close prospect. It now loomed as the big event of the year, and we were caught up in the feeling with which the farmer watched crop and weather. We knew that even while he pulled on his end of the cross-cut saw or barked logs ready for splitting his thoughts often strayed to the cultivation. If he was late for meals we knew where he had been lingering.

Mr Sims's view of the rye was no longer confined to the headland. He now ventured a few feet into the green, here and there crumbling a seedhead, parting the flag with his hands to examine the stalks.

Knowledge and good luck would both be necessary for a successful harvest. The right time to cut would be when the lowest part of the stalks turned yellow—showing that the roots had done their work for the year—but before the grain fully ripened, while it was yet soft and milky, and there was still nourishment all through the leaves and upper stalk. Good weather would be looked for then, so that the crop could be cut without delay and brought to cover without damage from rain.

There came the days when the rye was in full head. We were some while into the time of year when meals were eaten in shirt-sleeves, and with door and windows open. The world seemed working up to burst with light and warmth.

Work moved at a steadied pace, and we often rolled a log into the shade before beginning on it with maul and wedges. Every green thing in bush and clearing was moving to a climax of growth. Cicadas made the noon-day loud and Billy drowsed under the trees on three legs. Something in the air told you that the season was at the turn; and then came an evening when Mr Sims was more than ordinarily behind-hand in appearing at table, and said as he took

his seat, "Well, I'll begin cutting the rye in the morning."

It was a warm morning and dry, ideal harvest weather, with a mid-November bloom on it—just before the pallor of high summer—when everything you looked at seemed brighter than life and a size larger; and although work made you sweat freely you felt larger than life yourself.

The scytheman, stripped to grey flannel and with a red kerchief around his neck to ward off sunburn, trimmed a few straggling stalks which had sprung on the headland, then swung into the crop, and soon the lane of shaved stubble was lengthening behind him, while the rye subsided in dark swathes above the shining arc of his blade.

The use of the scythe is an art and beautiful to see. It takes skill which has become part of nature to wield that python handle so that the blade neither stabs the earth with its point nor raises the dust with its heel, but shears close and even. The movements of the scytheman's body are rhythmical like those of a ritual dance. His arms and shoulders swing wide above rigid hips, and the movements of his feet are timed to the sweep of the blade. In watching our scytheman you forgot his stooped shoulders and stiff gait; youth and grace had returned to him. In the return swing his blade came clean from under the swathe, leaving the windrows smooth for the binders who would come after him.

Twice in his first strip off the side of the crop Mr Sims turned to look back over his work in careful self-criticism; and when he had turned the corner of the field and was lost to us across the green from the chest down he up-ended his scythe to whet it.

His left forearm lay along the back of the blade to steady it. In his right hand the whetstone flashed back and forth as if it had a life of its own, and the blade sent a keen song into the morning air. After he had slipped the stone into the holder on the back of his belt he paused to mop his brow, and stared briefly over the crop. Perhaps the shades of old scythemen had come to swing their blades with his; at any rate, before he reversed the scythe he lifted his voice in a bar or two of his favourite lay.

Annie, Jessie and I were the binders. We began when some of the rye had dried out a little.

Mr Sims came back from the face of the crop

and showed us how to take a handful of grain, divide it and, by a dexterous twist of the hands, knot the heads to make a band to bind a sheaf. After a few fumbles we caught the trick—to our immense satisfaction—and from then on we followed at a distance behind the scythe, gathering and binding the rye into sheaves and standing the sheaves by the head in stooks of half a dozen to cure ready for carting.

It was warm work. The sun smarted on our bent backs. The stubble stabbed our hands and crackled under our feet. But it was good work, and we were careful to leave our stooks in rows as straight as could be desired.

Little by little as we followed the scythe around the field the green square in the centre grew less and less, until there came a time when we stood to raise a cheer as the last of it fell. Then Mr Sims joined us and we learnt to our surprise just how quickly sheaves could be made and stooks put together.

When the stooking was finished the field was a great pride to us all. It was let remain for a day or two until the hay was nicely dried; then we took the hood off the wagon, harnessed Billy, and drew in load after load of the sweet-smelling stuff until the twilit cavern of the store, between the stable and the wagon shelter, was crammed to the rafters—and the harvest was home.

The old road rewarded our hope of it, and we came to White's Turn-off just past where the bitumen road glides up out of the gullies to take over the running on top of the range.

We turned on to the bush track. The tree butts and saplings came close to the sides of the car, and we were near our journey's end.

I didn't expect—not after thirty-five years—to find the scene as I had left it. The selection was abandoned. I knew this much from a chance encounter, a few years previously, with a man who had known the Sims. Mr Sims had succeeded in making a living from the selection until, in his seventies, it had proved too much for his declining strength, and he and his wife had gone to live with children in the city. Here they had remained until he died, and she followed him within a few weeks. None of the sons had thought the place worth carrying on.

In returning for a day—a blessing on John—I was realizing a hope I had nurtured for many

years and in far places. Neither time nor distance had dulled the edge of happy recollection, nor robbed the old man of stature. In my thoughts he had come in a way to stand for all humanity, holding to its dream while heart and nerve endure. I wanted to glimpse again the ground where he had fought the good fight—just as in telling this story I seek with words to make him a memorial.

We reached our destination and alighted. As we passed through the broken gate I noticed that the area of the clearing had increased very little since I last saw it. The pasture paddocks had not materialized. The demands of the orchard as the trees grew in size—together, no doubt, with diminishing strength as the years passed—would explain this.

There was little to be seen; just a clearing in the bush with a thin coat of grass over the old plough-rumpled earth. Of the young apple-trees I remembered on the right there were remaining only a couple of hoary old stumps with broken and withered arms; and on the left just a green slope where the raspberries had been. Of the dividing fence only a couple of old grey posts were standing, and the grass now hid the cart track.

The homestead buildings had vanished and the site looked strange, marked with a couple of tall, dark trees which I remembered only as seedlings. There was a hard lump where the chimney had stood and a bare patch where the barn had been. That was all. The lips of the well had fallen in, like an old mouth turned to the sky.

We stood a while, our minds busy with thoughts inevitable to such a place. I was wondering what the dark-haired lad in dungarees would have thought of the baldish man in city togs revisiting his morning scene, and what thoughts had been in the minds of the old man and his wife when it came time for them to retreat. The road to yesterday had brought us to the end of tomorrow—all to-morrows. It seemed odd that I hadn't counted on that.

It was a pleasant day, brightly sunny, blue-skied and quiet. We could hear water trickling down the fern gully behind us, and there was a whiff of wild clematis in the air. A magpie was being happy about something among the trees beyond the open grass, and we saw a fox trail his brush across the bottom corner of the clearing.

The fence around the clearing—once so trim and taut—was now in a state of collapse, rotten posts leaning awry, and wires missing or fallen slack. Saplings were thrusting up through the ruin, and a seedling shrub or two was growing on the grassland. Little by little the bush was reclaiming its own—though there would be an open green place in the wilderness for many a year.

On leaving the gate we encountered a couple of local bushmen; men at the turn of forty, they would have been toddlers when I was a lad; and from them I added a little to my knowledge of events since the days I recalled. Harry had fought through the war from Gallipoli onwards. Jessie had afterwards gone with him wheat-farming in the Mallee, and there had married another veteran of the campaigns.

Charlie and Annie were still in the district, along the new road, in the red-soil potato-growing country, farther back in the hills. There was a grandson who was an aviator. It was too late for further visiting, but I made a note of addresses.

We went on then a few miles and picnicked under the tall gums where King Parrot Creek comes singing from the gorges over a bed of green and grey stones. After lunch we enjoyed climbing over creek-bed boulders and mossy logs, spotting trout in the brown pools. We gathered an armful of bush foliage—harmony in low tones—and we set out for the city again when the gullies were in shadow and the hill-tops golden. We travelled by the new road, sliding swiftly and smoothly around its sleek curves.



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